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STEFAN GEORGE AND THE NEW EMPIRE[1]

FIRST Rilke, then Hölderlin . . and for some time Stefan George has been threatening to burst upon the English literary scene as the next fashion in German poets. Mr. Bowra wrote on George in his *Heritage of Symbolism,* mentioning a projected book of translations by Cyril Scott who was once admitted to friendship with the Master, but this book by Carol North Valhope and Ernst Morwitz must take the credit for opening an offensive which I doubt will be as successful as the others.

Let us collect together what ideas we have hitherto held on the subject, some of them born of ignorance and not, alas, entirely dispelled by Morwitz's introductory essay: that George began as an aesthete on regular lines but acquired a national mission; that he founded and acted as High Priest to a literary-philosophical clique which combined the solidarity of the erstwhile Auden-Spender group with the dignified intercourse of a Papal session; that, after the manner of the Greeks, he worshipped a beautiful youth; and, above all, that his work is mystical, deep, obscure, private. But if we come to George's poetry with this somewhat sensational (though typically contemporary) notion in our heads, then not unnaturally we shall find ourselves agreeing in shame with George's dictum that 'the word of seers is not for common sharing'. We can save ourselves from such outer darkness, however, if only we remember that too often the actual work of an artist and the cult of that artist as fostered by his disciples and, comprehensibly enough, by the artist himself, are two completely different things. As I pointed out in the last number of *Scrutiny,* it is necessary to bear this in mind when dealing with Rilke, and it is equally necessary when tackling George.

As a substitute for the conception I have just sketched out, I should like to propose this: that George is a truly fine poet who communicates in very telling fashion certain reasonably traditional ideals of mental and emotional vivacity, of good taste united with a proper regard for the instinctive springs of life. And, to begin by opposing one extreme with another, we ought briefly to glance at one of George's last poems, *Sea Song* from *Das neue Reich*:

> When on the verge with gentle fall
> Down dips the fire-reddened ball,
> Then on the dunes I pause to rest
> That I may see a cherished guest.

---

[1] *Stefan George: Poems* (German-English Edition), introduction and English versions by Carol North Valhope and Ernst Morwitz (pub. Kegan Paul, 10/6).

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This time of day is dull at home,
The flower wilts in salty foam,
And in a house so far away
With alien woman, none will stay.

With naked limbs, with cloudless eye
A goldhaired child now passes by,
It sings and dances as it nears,
Behind the boat it disappears.

I watch it come, I watch it go,
Though never words for it I know,
And never speech for me it had,
The brief beholding makes me glad.[2]

What does it—particularly the last line—remind us of? Surely, the simple lyrical Wordsworth. And this, mark you, is a poem from *The New State,* a volume which in theory one would expect to elucidate the subtile laws of some ultramundane Atlanta. Of course there is much more to George than one would gather from this little song, just as there is more to Wordsworth than his 'host of golden daffodils'. In fact the relation of the minor poem to the major work is very similar in the two cases, and to say this is to suggest a useful corrective to the pre-Raphaelite-cum-pontifical conception of the German poet.

It was sometime before the publication of *The Seventh Ring* in 1907 that George met 'Maximin', the attractive and gifted youth who, after his early death, was elevated more or less to the status of a god by George and his disciples. It is true that the Maximin experience was of great importance in George's development, but not, I think, in that it revealed to him any divine and hitherto unacknowledged truth; rather, by confirming him in the views he already held, in just the same way as 'Diotima' had encouraged Hölderlin in his hour of need, by demonstrating the human possibility of achieving his ideals. Thus too much emphasis should not be laid upon this rather obscure affair, for the likelihood is that it was more a personal crisis than an artistic or philosophical apocalypse, and the poetry written afterwards is quite in line with what preceded the experience, merely somewhat explicit, more confident, and rather more didactic—the boy-god was for George the means to communicate an attitude rather than the reason for that attitude.

This poem might have been written any time after his early maturing; actually it comes from *Das Jahr der Seele,* 'The Year of the Soul', published in 1897:

Komm in den totgesagten park und schau:
Der schimmer ferner lächelnder gestade,

---

[2] '. . . sein kurzer anblick bringt mir lust'.

This (quite adequate) translation, and those that follow, are all from the book under review.

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Der reinen wolken unverhofftes blau
Erhellt die weiher und die bunten pfade.

Dort nimm das tiefe gelb, das weiche grau
Von birken und von buchs, der wind ist lau,
Die späten rosen welkten noch nicht ganz,
Erlese küsse sie und flicht den kranz,

Vergiss auch diese letzten astern nicht,
Den purpur um die ranken wilder reben
Und auch was übrig blieb von grünem leben
Verwinde leicht im herbstlichen gesicht.

Morwitz's translation is exact and altogether quite successful:

Come to the park they say is dead, and view
The shimmer of the smiling shores beyond,
The stainless clouds with unexpected blue
Diffuse a light on motley path and pond.

The tender grey, the burning yellow seize
Of birch and boxwood, mellow is the breeze.
Not wholly do the tardy roses wane,
So kiss and gather them and wreathe the chain.

The purple on the twists of wilding vine,
The last of asters you shall not forget,
And what of living verdure lingers yet,
Around the autumn vision lightly twine.

The verse moves with a regular unwavering tread, very different from Rilke's fluid rhythms, but there is no sense of monotony since the poems are mostly short lyrics and differ, metrically, one from another. This 'iron verse'—but gloved, certainly, in the velvet of vowel sounds—is as natural and legitimate in the hands of George as is the mobile quivering line which Rilke employs in the *Duino Elegies*, and it would be a pity if the suspicion we entertain nowadays towards the exponents of 'form' should inhibit us from enjoying what is undoubtedly major verse (incidentally it is verse made for declamation and loses more of its effect than most poetry by silent reading). The prevailing theme of *Das Jahr der Seele*, in crude abstract, would seem to be the self-communings of the poet during the changing seasons of creative power, but each poem stands in its own right, many of them apparently 'pure' impressions.

The next volume, *Der Teppich des Lebens* ('The Tapestry of Life'), has more of the philosophical element in it than had the earlier work, but even to say this is perhaps to give a false impression:

Give me again the solemn breath and great,
Give me the blaze again that renders young,
With which the wings of childhood once were swung
To earliest fumes of off'rings consecrate.

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I will not breathe save in your fragrant air,
Enlock me wholly in your shrine, accord
A single crumb from off your lavish board!
In sombre chasms this is now my prayer.

And HE: what meets my ear with stormy stir
Are wishes that inextricably vie,
With treasures craved by you, to gratify
Is not my office, honor I confer

Is not attained by force, this you shall know!
But then my arms against HIS knees I bowed,
With tongues of all my wakened yearning vowed:
Except you bless, I will not let you go.[3]

Obviously a 'religious poem', it might seem, at first sight, in the friendly Christian tradition of George Herbert; 'Except you bless, I will not let you go' . . . that nice balance of humble adoration and equable independence; but it is religious with a difference, for the god is a part of George's self, and if HE seems to exist outside the poet it is only by poetic licence and not by philosophical law. This god or 'Angel' (not to be confused with the altogether more significant Angel of Rilke's *Duino Elegies*) makes his appearance in 'Ich forschte bleichen eifers nach dem horte', a poem from the same volume, revealing in more than one way:

For treasure, pale with passion once I peered,
For verses fraught with sorrow most profound,
With things that moved in vague and stolid round—
When through the gate a naked angel neared:

And to the mind that was submerged within
He brought a bloomy load of richest dower,
No less his fingers were than almond flower,
And roses, roses were about his chin.

No coronet was set upon his head,
And to my own his voice was nearly true:
From Life where beauty rules, I come to you
As herald: and while smiling this he said,

The lilies and mimosa from him spilled—
And when to gather them I bended low,
HE also knelt, with happiness aglow
In fresh-blown roses all my face I stilled.

The beginning (even discounting the unfortunate Swinburnian alliteration of the translation) reminds us of Ernest Dowson and Lionel Johnson, our own amateur aesthetes, but the third line shocks us awake with that unpoetic *dumpf*—just one of many indications that George exists on another plane from his apparently nearest English

[3]Again a sound translation, except for the clumsy third stanza.

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equivalents (actually he knew Dowson personally and translated some of his poetry into German, Swinburne's as well).

'No coronet was set upon his head, And to my own his voice was nearly true': the Angel is anthropomorphic, though fashioned not precisely in man's image, but in the artist's (more exactly the next line is 'the beautiful life sends me to you as messenger'). The philosophy is, after all, a bare enough individualism—the poet seeking his own fulfilment with the aid of a religious mechanism—the worshipper is the all-important figure, not what is worshipped. Indeed, one would have some excuse for describing it as anti-philosophical, for here and elsewhere George seems to be cheering himself up, bolstering his self-confidence, assuring himself that he really *is* right, rather than telling us what he is right *about*. A related phenomenon is the impression I have that so much of his life and of his verse was taken up in a search for people who believed as he did, with whom he might 'build, according to your early desire, the monastery of peace', that the very intensity of this search with all its ardours and disappointments tends to hide the thinness of the original beliefs. Not that this is to be deplored: for that persistent but vain search produced some very moving poetry.

It is in the following volume, *Der Siebente Ring* (a reference to the rings visible in the cross-section of a tree-trunk, and also to the fact that this is George's seventh volume) that the deification of Maximin, the incarnation of the ideal, takes place:

> Unite in gladness, now no longer darkened
> And flushing for an age whose gold is flown:
> The calling of a god you too have hearkened,
> It was a god whose mouth has kissed your own.
>
> You also were elect—no longer mourn
> For all your days in unfulfilment sheathed . . .
> Praise to your city where a god was born!
> Praise to your age in which a god has breathed!

But what I particularly wish to quote from this volume is a remarkably fine lament for the passing of the god, *Trauer*; the translation is very good, retaining the unemphatic desolation, the curt record of hopelessness:

> Woods cry in anguish.
> In vain they decked themselves in leaves of spring,
> The field awaited you to bless it, numb
> With cold, since now no sun you bring:
> The fragile grasses on the hillside languish
> Where now you never come.
>
> What are the buddings that you do not wake,
> The branches that your fingers do not weave,
> What are the flowers that you do not reave,
> The fruits you do not taste—whom shall they slake!

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In sappy timber cracking
Of stem for stem—what next is bowed?
The morning green is growing worn,
The blades scarce risen upward, lying shorn,
No bird sings . . . only frosty winds are clacking,
And then the axe is loud.

The volume entitled *The Star of the Covenant* contains the most explicit statements of belief, it is the *nearest* George ever came to didacticism. Maximin ceases to be the lamented wonderful dead companion and becomes the God, the landmark, the touchstone, the guarantee:

We felt a darkness laid across the land,
The temple tottered and the inner fires
No longer leaped for us, whom other fevers
Had wasted than our fathers' . . .
Then you, our own, from native stock appeared,
Confronting us in naked glows of godhood:
No statue was so fair, no dream so real!
Then out of hallowed hands fulfillment flooded,
Then there was light and every yearning stilled.

At this point one should attempt to define, as far as that is possible, George's conception of the 'true way of life'. This, also from *Der Stern des Bundes,* is characteristic:

He, who unworthy, does not use his wealth
Should weep: not who is poor or who has lost . . .
You are the finder of the rod whose jerk
Betrays where healing water wants to rise,
And veins of gold are slumbering in the depths.
Be not afraid, nor wonder: why just I?
Cast not the charm defiantly aside
Because you grasp it not . . . rejoice and help
As long as in your hand the wand obeys.

What is the true way of life? The answer comes, 'to live life at its fullest' . . . and once again we find ourselves thinking of the English aesthetes and Pater's summing-up—'to burn always with this hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life'.

The richest fete is avid for renewal,
From fugitive to-day it gleans endurance . . .
Then let it come to pass that I, affirming
The law of life, may glow with every rapture!

Notwithstanding the resemblance to the aesthetic craze for sensations in the void, George does not merely offer us what in the abstract is a banal, even fatuous, exhortation; he shows us what it is to live in this way, in poem after poem. 'With plans of day I never shall be held, The heavy winds of dream have first to blow'—but not to lull us asleep, for 'They change, they colour everything around,

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That in its proper form we may behold it, That with its real name we may enfold it . . .' The dream, that is, transfigures the day, it does not replace it.

Unfortunately there is another stigma which has come to be associated with George and his work, and this raises the question of what has been called his 'shaky political views', in which I can see little more than a rather careless reference to his regard for intellectual aristocracy. Actually he was quite a good democrat since although he could hope only for a small élite, he thought the members of that élite were likelier to be of common birth than of noble family:

> New nobility you wanted
> Does not hail from crown or scutcheon!
> Men of whatsoever level
> Show their lust in venal glances,
> Show their greeds in ribald glances . . .
> Scions rare of rank intrinsic
> Grow from masses, not from peerage,
> And you will detect your kindred
> By the light within their eyes.

But most significant are the last two lines: you will recognize your kindred—not by the colour of their shirt, by the fairness of their hair, by the amount they invest in National Savings—but 'by the light within their eyes'. Nothing could demonstrate more clearly how far from any organized political or ethical programme George is. 'Nobility' is the keyword, but it opens many and diverse doors. Certainly it is an ill-boding omen that any philosophising, however vague, which desiderates cultivation of the spirit and accepts the inevitable exclusion of the majority should these days immediately come under suspicion of fascism. Morwitz's account of George's refusal to co-operate with the Nazi government, his statement that he did not wish to discuss the boundaries between art and politics with its members and his voluntary exile in Switzerland (all this in the early days of Nazism, for George died in December, 1933) should prove sufficiently that he knew there could be political short-cut to his poetic new order. As for the deliberate mis-application of his ideas by the Nazis, he can at once be absolved from all hint of reproach since it is surely an obvious fact that a political party can make use of practically any existent poet or philosopher, and that anyway they could secure their ends just as well without the help of extraneous thinkers, purely through their own private concoctions. George's New Reich bears as much relation to the Third Reich as it does to *de rigueur* journalistic Democracy, and just as little: the relation between art and catchword. 'So singt der dichter und der seher weiss: Das neue heil kommt nur aus neuer liebe'.

Both the artistic and personal subjugation of his disciples and the reports of outside visitors demonstrate that George's was an immensely powerful character, of the kind which in public life produces dictators. We, outside the *Kreis um Stefan George*, like

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those outside 'the party', have a less biassed view of the 'mission', and the worst we can say of George's message is that it is noble, clean, thoughtful and harmless. Fundamentally it is the traditional German admiration for the clear-eyed and yet profoundly-activated Greek way of life, that ideal which unites classical lucidity and dignity with the magical presence of active deities: 'Hellas ewig unsre liebe'. The dialogue *Man and Faun* in George's last volume, *Das Neue Reich* (1928), is a simple concise reflection on the insufficiency of the rationalist approach: the smug conceit of the Man, assuming himself the independent peak of natural development, and the admonition of the Faun who has the last word—

> Where we have trailed our shag, there spurts the milk,
> Where we withheld our hooves, there grows no grass.
> Your mind alone at work—and long ago
> Your kind had been destroyed and all it does.
> Your field would lie unsown and dry your brake . . .
> Only by magic, Life is kept awake.

Essentially Georgeanism is a milder, more dignified Nietzscheanism. Nietzsche attacked the decadence of society with the pungent wit of an Elizabethan pamphleteer, whereas George condemned its aimlessness with strong scornful words, always a little aloof, for he lacked that streak of energetic hopefulness which runs through *Also Sprach Zarathustra*—of whose author he wrote:

> The Warner passed . . . no other arm will stop
> The wheel that down to emptiness is driven.

George said 'the word of seers is not for common sharing', Nietzsche expressed the same idea less politely—'there is a life at which the rabble may not drink'. And George's Superman would be a cross between a priest and an artist, less roisterous than Nietzsche's suggestion—a cross between a Prussian officer and a Jew.

At least we can see how it is as easy to make out a case for George the 'pure lyric poet' as for George the High Priest hand in glove with the dark, if rather exclusive, gods. The truth lies, as often, between the two extremes; George's poetry provides the mind with an average ration of good meat but there is no reason why his devotees should find themselves complaining of spiritual indigestion. He is a poet who should not suffer from comparison with Rilke (who at the time was, not surprisingly, the *bête noir* of the George-circle, and beside him appears positively metaphysical) for he stands alone among modern poets in his sensitive mastery of formal verse. This, the last poem of the last volume, shows him at his best, the incontestable genius of a limited (though not narrow) kind of art:

> Du schlank und rein wie eine flamme
> Du wie der morgen zart und licht
> Du blühend reis vom edlen stamme
> Du wie ein quell geheim und schlicht

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Begleitest mich auf sonnigen matten
Umschauerst mich im abendrauch
Erleuchtest meinen weg im schatten
Du kühler wind du heisser hauch

Du bist mein wunsch und mein gedanke
Ich atme dich mit jeder luft
Ich schlürfe dich mit jedem tranke
Ich küsse dich mit jedem duft

Du blühend reis vom edlen stamme
Du wie ein quell geheim und schlicht
Du schlank und rein wir eine flamme
Du wie der morgen zart und licht.

You flawless as a flame and slender
You flower sprung from Crown and Spear,
You as the morning, light and tender,
You secret as a spring and clear,

Companion me in sunny meadows,
Entremble me in evening haze,
You shine upon my path through shadows,
You cool of wind, you breath of blaze.

You are my dreaming and my waking,
The air I breathe with you is pent,
In every draught you are my slaking,
And you I kiss in every scent.

You as the morning, light and tender,
You flower sprung from Crown and Spear,
You flawless as a flame and slender,
You secret as a spring and clear.

* * * *

Mr. Morwitz's introductory essay is useful more for the information it gives than for any critical estimate of the poetry, but useful it certainly is, for Mr. Morwitz was in close touch with George. In the highly technical note on the *Method and Purpose of the Translation* Messrs. Valhope and Morwitz describe their analytical approach in some detail—'every line was examined to find where the emphasis lay in thought and in rhythm'—and one cannot but be impressed by the seriousness with which they regarded their task, so different from the intuitive method usually embraced by translators. Impressed, though perhaps slightly amused by such scientific scrupulosity in attempting what is in the last resort the impossible. While it is not so easy to duplicate alliteration and assonance, the translators nearly always succeed in reproducing the rhythm of the line without undue distortion of its meaning—as, for instance, in the first line of *Vogelschau,* by the simple device of legitimately separating the adjective from the noun: 'White I saw the swallows

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winging' for 'Weisse schwalben sah ich fliegen'. Occasionally there is an error of tact—when they render 'verspäteter sonnen erglühn' as 'the sun with an ultimate sheen', they retain the rhythm at the expense of using the word 'ultimate' which has associations out of place here, since the literal meaning is 'the glow of belated suns'. But such errors are rare, and the translators are to be congratulated on the results of what must have been very hard work.

D. J. ENRIGHT.

GEORGE HERBERT

I.

THE poetry of George Herbert is so intimately bound up with his beliefs as a Christian and his practice as a priest of the Church of England that those who enjoy the poetry without sharing the beliefs may well feel some presumption in attempting to define the human, as distinguished from the specifically Christian, value of his work. The excuse for such an attempt can only be the conviction that there is much more in Herbert's poetry for readers of *all* kinds than is recognized in the common estimate. That his appeal is a wide one is implicit in the accepted claim that he is a poet and not simply a writer of devotional verse; but I think I am right in saying that discussion of him tends to take for granted that admirers are likely to be drawn from a smaller circle than admirers of, say, Donne or Marvell. Even Canon Hutchinson, whose superbly edited and annotated edition of the complete Works is not likely to be superseded[1]—it would be difficult to imagine a better qualified editor and introducer—even Canon Hutchinson remarks that, 'if to-day there is a less general sympathy with Herbert's religion, the beauty and sincerity of its expression are appreciated by those who do not share it'. True; but it is also much more than the 'expression' that we appreciate, as I shall try to show. Herbert's poetry is an integral part of the great English tradition.

It is, however, with expression, with form and manner, that appreciation must begin, and Dr. Hutchinson directs our attention to what are unquestionably the most important features of Herbert's style. 'His craftsmanship is conspicuous. Almost any poem of his has its object well defined', he says. And again:

> 'Few English poets have been able to use the plain words of ordinary speech with a greater effect of simple dignity than

[1] *The Works of George Herbert,* Edited with a Commentary by F. E. Hutchinson (Oxford University Press, 30/-). Canon Hutchinson's essay on Herbert in *Seventeenth-Century Studies Presented to Sir Herbert Grierson* should also be consulted.

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> Herbert. From Donne he had learnt the use of the conversational tone, which establishes an intimacy between poet and reader; and when his poems are read aloud, the emphasis falls easily on the natural order of the speaking idiom'.

In other words, Herbert, like Donne, is a realist in literature. The first *Jordan* poem ('Who says that fictions only and false hair Become a verse?') is not only an expression of personal dedication, it is also, as the second poem of the same title is explicitly, a literary manifesto:

> Is it no verse, except enchanted groves
> And sudden arbours shadow course-spunne lines?
> Must purling streams refresh a lovers loves?
> Must all be vail'd, while he that reades, divines,
> Catching the sense at two removes?
>
> Shepherds are honest people; let them sing:
> Riddle who list, for me, and pull for Prime . . .

The 'pure, manly and unaffected' diction that Coleridge noted, the rhythm that, though musical, is close to the rhythm of living speech, the construction that almost always follows the evolution of thought and feeling, even in the most intricate of the stanza forms that he used in such variety—these elements of Herbert's style show his determination to make his verse sincere and direct, to avoid even the slightest degree of the distortion that occurs when a preconceived idea of 'the poetical' takes charge of the matter. And the effort of craftsmanship involved was one with the moral effort to know himself, to bring his conflicts into the daylight and, so far as possible, to resolve them. It is in the wide application of Herbert's self-discovery that the value of his poetry lies; but before approaching the substance of his verse I should like to examine some aspects of his style that have had less attention than those so far glanced at. For the 'definition of the object' that Dr. Hutchinson rightly puts in the forefront of Herbert's achievement as a poet is not simply a matter of surface purity and naturalness; it has depth and solidity, and we need to become conscious of the variety of resources brought to bear in the process—simple only in appearance—that the defining is.

It is here that literary criticism necessarily joins hands with 'the sociology of literature', since what we are concerned with is the personal use of a more than personal idiom with its roots in tradition and the general life. To the critic no less than to the student of English civilization in the first half of the seventeenth century it is of considerable significance that Herbert, as man and artist, is not the product of one social class alone. An aristocrat by birth, and related to some of the more prominent figures at court, the protégé of James I, the friend of Donne and Bacon, he has also that ingrained sense of 'common' English life which in so many representative figures of the time blends with and modifies the intellectual currents from the world of courtly refinement, learning

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and public affairs. His poetry has plainly an upper-class background. The Metaphysical subtlety and intellectual analysis that he learnt from Donne,[2] the skill in music—so pleasantly attested by Walton—that one senses even in his handling of the spoken word, the easy and unostentatious references to science and learning, all imply a cultivated milieu.[3] And although the rightness of tone that keeps even his most intimate poetry free from sentimentality or over-insistence springs from deeply personal characteristics, it is also related to the well-bred ease of manner of 'the gentleman'.[4]

Turn however to that poem with the characteristic title, *The Quip*, and a different aspect of Herbert's genius, implying a different source of strength, is at once apparent.

> The merrie world did on a day
> With his train-bands and mates agree
> To meet together, where I lay,
> And all in sport to geere at me.
>
> First, Beautie crept into a rose,
> Which when I pluckt not, Sir, said she,
> Tell me, I pray, Whose hands are those?
> *But thou shalt answer, Lord, for me.*
>
> Then Money came, and chinking still,
> What tune is this, poore man? said he:
> I heard in Musick you had skill.
> *But thou shalt answer, Lord, for me.*
>
> Then came brave Glorie puffing by
> In silks that whistled, who but he?
> He scarce allow'd me half an eie.
> *But thou shalt answer, Lord, for me . . .*

---

[2]Herbert's metaphysical wit has marked differences from Donne's as well as affinities with it. It tends in one direction towards humour, which is saved by its intellectual quality from anything like whimsicality. The following verse from *Vanitie* (I) shows his amused play of mind:

> The subtil Chymick can devest
> And strip the creature naked, till he finde
> The callow principles within their nest:
> There he imparts to them his minde,
> Admitted to their bed-chamber, before
> They appeare trim and drest
> To ordinarie suitors at the doore.

[3]See in this connexion his fine poem, *The Pearl.*

[4]That Herbert's invariable courtesy is based on a genuine responsiveness to other people—that it is not simply 'good manners'—is plain from the advice given in *The Church Porch, e.g.* stanzas 52-55. See also Letter XII in Dr. Hutchinson's edition, where Herbert discusses the needs of his orphan nieces.

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The personifications here have nothing in common either with Spenser's allegorical figures or with the capitalized abstractions of the eighteenth century: 'Brave Glorie puffing by In silks that whistled' might have come straight from *The Pilgrim's Progress*. And Bunyan, as Dr. G. R. Owst has shown,[5] had behind him not only the rich folk culture that produced the ballads, but also a long line of preachers in the vernacular. Again and again Herbert reminds us of the popular preacher addressing his audience—without a shade of condescension in doing so—in the homely manner that they themselves use. There is humour, mimicry and sarcasm, seen most clearly when the verses are read aloud with the inflexions they demand.

> He doth not like this vertue, no;
> Give him his dirt to wallow in all night:
> These Preachers make
> His head to shoot and ake. (*Miserie*)

> *Love God, and love your neighbour. Watch and pray.*
> *Do as ye would be done unto.*
> O dark instructions; ev'n as dark as day!
> Who can these Gordian knots undo? (*Divinitie*)

> To be in both worlds full
> Is more then God was, who was hungrie here.
> Wouldst thou his laws of fasting disanull?
> Enact good cheer?
> Lay out thy joy, yet hope to save it?
> Wouldst thou both eat thy cake, and have it?
> (*The Size*)

Herbert, we know, made a collection of 'Outlandish (*sc.* foreign) Proverbs' for the community at Little Gidding, and although he does not often, as in the last quotation, incorporate a popular saying, many of his terse sentences have a proverbial ring.

Herbert's 'popular' manner is, however, far more deeply grounded—and serves a more important purpose in his poetry—than these last examples might suggest.

> Let forrain nations of their language boast,
> What fine varietie each tongue affords:
> I like our language, as our men and coast:
> Who cannot dresse it well, want wit, not words.

This, from *The Sonne*, is explicit—'I like our language': and one way of enforcing the judgment that he is in the great English tradition is to point out how surely he uses the native idiom to give the effect of something immediately present, something going on under one's eyes. In the colloquial expostulation of *Conscience* an overactive scrupulousness comes to life as it is rebuked:

[5] In *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England*.

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Peace pratler, do not lowre:
Not a fair look, but thou dost call it foul:
Not a sweet dish, but thou dost call it sowre:
Musick to thee doth howl.
By listning to thy chatting fears
I have both lost mine eyes and eares.

The opening of *The Discharge* has a similar, almost dramatic, effect:

Busie enquiring heart, what wouldst thou know?
Why dost thou prie,
And turn, and leer, and with a licorous eye
Look high and low:
And in thy lookings stretch and grow?

Even his simplest poems have a muscular force, an almost physical impact, as in the description of 'the honest man' (in *Constancie*):

Whom neither force nor fawning can
Unpinne, or wrench from giving all their due.

He uses alliteration and assonance in the native Elizabethan way, not, that is, as a poetic or musical device, but as a means of controlling emphasis and movement so as to obtain the maximum immediacy. To the examples already given may be added these lines from *The Flower*:

Many a spring I shoot up fair,
Offring at heav'n, growing and groning thither,

where the effect is, in Shakespearean fashion, to assimilate the participles to each other, so that the groans seem an intrinsic part of the growing. It is the artist's feeling for *all* the resources of 'our language' that gives to the greater poems of spiritual conflict their disturbing immediacy.

Herbert's style, then, is 'popular' as well as courtly and Metaphysical, and his leaning towards the manner of common Elizabethan speech is further emphasized by his well-known liking for homely illustrations, analogies and metaphors. His poems contain plenty of learned allusions (especially, as was natural in that age, to astronomy), but he certainly 'goes less far afield for his analogies than Donne and finds most that will serve his purpose from common life'—from carpentry, gardening and everyday domestic activity: Redemption 'spreads the plaister equal to the crime', after the refreshment of sleep, day will 'give new wheels to our disorder'd clocks', and so on. But although this feature of Herbert's style is so commonly recognized that further illustration is unnecessary, its function is sometimes misinterpreted, as though Herbert's experience were somehow *limited* by his interest in the commonplace. Even Professor Grierson, after listing some of Herbert's comparisons, remarks:

> 'These are the "mean" similes which in Dr. Johnson's view were fatal to poetic effect even in Shakespeare. We have learned not to be so fastidious, yet when they are not purified by the

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passionate heat of the poet's dramatic imagination the effect is a little stuffy, for the analogies and symbols are more fanciful or traditional than natural and imaginative'

The last sentence, it is true, contains a qualifying clause, *'when* they are not purified by . . imagination'; but since Professor Grierson goes on to describe Herbert as a 'sincere and sensitive' rather than a 'greatly imaginative' poet, some undue emphasis remains on the phrase 'a little stuffy'.[6]

The significance of Herbert's 'homely' imagery—pointing as it does to some of the central preoccupations of his poetry—is something that we need to get clear. But before taking up this question—or, rather, as a way of taking it up—I should like to bring into focus another aspect of his imagery. As well as metaphor and simile Herbert uses symbols and allegory. Now whereas metaphor conveys its meaning directly from common experience, in symbolism there is usually an element of the arbitrary. *The Church-floore* is an obvious example:

Mark you the floore? that square and speckled stone,
Which looks so firm and strong,
Is *Patience.*

But this arbitrary use of symbols is not characteristic of Herbert. Much more often his verse (like Bunyan's prose) gives life to his symbolic figures and allegorical situations, so that they appear as something immediately experienced, and carry their meaning with them. Even the highly emblematic poem, *Love Unknown,* has a matter-of-fact quality that makes it something more than a monument to a by-gone taste. In *The Pilgrimage* the allegory is completely realized in terms of the actual.

I travell'd on, seeing the hill, where lay
My expectation.
A long it was and weary way.
The gloomy cave of Desperation
I left on th' one, and on the other side
The rock of Pride.

And so I came to Fancies medow strow'd
With many a flower:
Fain would I here have made abode,
But I was quicken'd by my houre.
So to Cares cops I came, and there got through
With much ado.

---

[6]'But if not a greatly imaginative, Herbert is a sincere and sensitive poet, and an accomplished artist elaborating his argumentative strain or little allegories and conceits with felicitous completeness, and managing his variously patterned stanzas . . . with a finished and delicate harmony'.—*Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century,* pp. xliii-xliv.

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That led me to the wilde of Passion, which
Some call the wold;
A wasted place, but sometimes rich.
Here I was robb'd of all my gold,
Save one good Angell, which a friend had ti'd
Close to my side.

Mr. Empson, analysing the rich meaning of the third verse,[7] remarks that Herbert's manner is that of a traveller, 'long afterwards, mentioning where he has been and what happened to him, as if only to pass the time'. But the air of verisimilitude, the impression of a difficult journey actually undertaken, is not only an effect of the sober tone; it springs also from the sensitive and subtle movement. In reading the second verse we feel that we ourselves have been in 'Cares cops' and scrambled out

—got through
With much ado—

as best we might. The fourth verse, making skilful use of the varied lengths of line and of the slight end-of-line pauses, reproduces the sensations of the traveller, as expectation—rather out of breath, but eager and confident—gives way abruptly to flat disappointment:

At length I got unto the gladsome hill,
Where lay my hope,
Where lay my heart; and climbing still,
When I had gain'd the brow and top,
A lake of brackish waters on the ground
Was all I found.

The allegorical form is of course a reminder that what we are concerned with is a graph of more than one kind of experience, but at no point in the poem are we simply interpreting an allegory; the bitter poignancy of the conclusion springs from deeply personal feelings that we have been made to share.

With that abash'd and struck with many a sting
Of swarming fears,
I fell, and cry'd, Alas my King!
Can both the way and end be tears?
Yet taking heart I rose, and then perceiv'd
I was deceiv'd:

My hill was further: so I flung away,
Yet heard a crie
Just as I went, *None goes that way*
And lives: If that be all, said I,
After so foul a journey death is fair,
And but a chair.

[7] *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, pp. 163-165. Mr. Empson also has some excellent criticism of other poems by Herbert.

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This use of vivid allegory—tied down, as it were, to the actual and immediate—represents one aspect of Herbert's method. In poems such as *Vertue* and *Life* ('I made a posie, while the day ran by') we have the opposite and complementary process, where natural objects, without ceasing to be natural, have a rich symbolic meaning. In the lovely lines of *Vertue* the rose is no less a real rose, 'angrie and brave', for being at the same time a symbol of life rooted in death. It is here that we see something of the significance of Herbert's consistent use of homely and familiar imagery. We may recall Coleridge's acount of the genesis of the *Lyrical Ballads*: 'Mr. Wordsworth was to propose to himself as his object to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and wonder of the world before us'. It is 'the things of every day' that Herbert's poetry keeps consistently before us; but instead of invoking a rather adventitious 'charm of novelty' or exciting 'a feeling analogous to the supernatural' (one thinks of *Peter Bell*), he sees them in direct relation to a supernatural order in which he firmly believes. Thus in his poetry, just as the supernatural is apprehended in terms of the familiar, so common things—*whilst remaining common things,* clearly observed, and deeply felt—have a supernatural significance, and the familiar is perpetually new. 'This is the skill, and doubtless the Holy Scripture intends thus much', he says, 'when it condescends to the naming of a plough, a hatchett, a bushell, leaven, boyes piping and dancing; shewing that things of ordinary use are not only to serve in the way of drudgery, but to be washed and cleansed, and serve for lights even of Heavenly Truths'.[8] Once more we are reminded of Bunyan, in whose blend of Biblical language and native idiom the august events of the Bible seem to be transacted in a familiar world, and the humble doings of every day are placed in a context that reveals how momentous they are.

II.

Herbert's message to Nicholas Ferrar when, a few weeks before his death, he sent him the manuscript of *The Temple*, is well known.

> 'Sir, I pray deliver this little book to my dear brother Ferrar, and tell him he shall find in it a picture of the many spiritual conflicts that have passed betwixt God and my soul, before I could subject mine to the will of Jesus my Master; in whose service I have now found perfect freedom; desire him to read it: and then, if he can think it may turn to the advantage of any dejected poor soul, let it be made public; if not let him burn it; for I and it are less than the least of God's mercies'.

Herbert's poetry was for him very largely a way of working out his conflicts. But it does not, like some religious poetry, simply

[8] *A Priest to the Temple or The Country Parson,* Chap. xxi.

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express conflict; it is consciously and steadily directed towards resolution and integration. Dr. Hutchinson rightly describes the poems as 'colloquies of the soul with God or self-communings which seek to bring order into that complex personality of his which he analyses so unsparingly'.

This general account of conflict and resolution as the stuff of Herbert's poetry is, I believe, commonly accepted. But the conflict that gets most—indeed almost exclusive—attention is the struggle between the ambitious man of the world and the priest. Dr. Hutchinson rightly insists that Herbert's conflict of mind was not simply about the priesthood, that his spiritual struggle 'was over the more general issue of his submission to the Divine will' (p. lxviii); but he elsewhere records the opinion that 'his principal temptation, the "one cunning bosome-sin" which is apt to break through all his fences, is ambition'.[9] Now it would certainly be unwise to underestimate Herbert's worldly ambitions, or the severity of the struggle that took place in one 'not exempt from passion and choler', who liked fine clothes and good company, before he could renounce his hopes of courtly preferment and, finally, become a country parson. But it seems to me that if we focus all our attention there, seeing the struggle simply as one between 'ambition' and 'renunciation', we ignore some even more fundamental aspects of Herbert's self-division and at the same time obscure the more general relevance of his experience. Most criticism of the poet tends to suggest that we are simply watching someone else's conflict—sympathetic, no doubt, but not intimately involved ourselves.

Behind the more obvious temptation of 'success' was one more deeply rooted—a dejection of spirit that tended to make him regard his own life, the life he was actually leading, as worthless and unprofitable. Part of the cause was undoubtedly persistent ill-health. 'For my self', he said, 'I alwaies fear'd sickness more than death, because sickness hath made me unable to perform those Offices for which I came into the world, and must yet be kept in it' (p. 373); and this sense of the frustration of his best purposes through illness is expressed in *The Crosse* and other poems:

> And then when after much delay,
> Much wrastling, many a combate, this deare end,
> So much desir'd, is giv'n, to take away
> My power to serve thee; to unbend
> All my abilities, my designes confound,
> And lay my threatnings bleeding on the ground.

It is, however, difficult to resist the impression that his agues and consumption only intensified a more ingrained self-distrust. Commenting on some lines from *The Tempter* (i)

> —O let me, when thy roof my soul hath hid,
> O let me roost and nestle there—

[9] *Seventeenth-Century Studies Presented to Sir Herbert Grierson*, p. 154.

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Dr. Hutchinson remarks that 'Herbert often shows a fear of unlimited space and loves the shelter of an enclosure'; and his shrinking from the kind of experience that was possible for him shows itself now in the frequently recorded moods of despondency, now in the desire for a simpler and apparently more desirable form of existence:

> My stock lies dead, and no increase
> Doth my dull husbandrie improve. (*Grace*)

> All things are busie; onely I
> Neither bring hony with the bees,
> Nor flowres to make that, nor the husbandrie
> To water these.
> I am no link of thy great chain,
> But all my companie is a weed . . . (*Employment* i)

> Oh that I were an Orenge-tree,
> That busie plant!
> Then should I ever laden be,
> And never want
> Some fruit for him that dressed me. (*Employment* ii)

Now this feeling of uselessness and self-distrust has two further consequences: one is a preoccupation with time and death,

> . . . So we freeze on,
> Untill the grave increase our cold; (*Employment* ii)

the other is a sense that life, real life, is going on elsewhere, where he happens not to be himself. It was his weakness, as well as his more positive qualities of 'birth and spirit', that made a career at court seem so intensely desirable: 'the town' was where other people lived active and successful lives. Certainly, then, it was not a small achievement to 'behold the court with an impartial eye, and see plainly that it is made up of fraud, and titles, and flattery, and many other such empty, imaginary, painted pleasures; pleasures that are so empty, as not to satisfy when they are enjoyed'.[10] But it was an even greater achievement to rid himself of the torturing sense of frustration and impotence and to accept the validity of his own experience. His poems come home to us because they give new meanings to 'acceptance'.

The first condition of development was that the disturbing elements in experience should be honestly recognized; and here we see the significance of Herbert's technical achievement, of his realism, of his ability to make his feelings immediately present. In the masterly verse of *Affliction* (i) we have one of the most remarkable records in the language of the achievement of maturity and of the inevitable pains of the process. In the opening stanzas movement and imagery combine to evoke the enchanted world of early

[10]Herbert to Woodnot, on the night of his induction to Bemerton: recorded by Walton.

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manhood, when to follow the immediate dictates of the soul seems both duty and pleasure.

When first thou didst entice to thee my heart,
I thought the service brave:
So many joyes I writ down for my part,
Besides what I might have
Out of my stock of naturall delights,
Augmented with thy gracious benefits.

I looked on thy furniture so fine,
And made it fine to me:
Thy glorious houshold-stuffe did me entwine,
And 'tice me unto thee.
Such starres I counted mine: both heav'n and earth
Payd me my wages in a world of mirth.

What pleasures could I want, whose King I served,
Where joyes my fellows were?
Thus argu'd into hopes, my thoughts reserved
No place for grief or fear.
Therefore my sudden soul caught at the place,
And made her youth and fierceness seek thy face.

At first thou gav'st me milk and sweetnesses;
I had my wish and way:
My dayes were straw'd with flow'rs and happinesse;
There was no moneth but May.

But implicit in the description—as we see from 'entice' and 'entwine'[11] and the phrase, 'argu'd into hopes'—is the admission that there *is* enchantment, an element of illusion in the 'naturall delights', and we are not surprised when the triumphant fourth verse ends with the sudden bleak recognition of ills previously unperceived but inherent in the processes of life:

But with my yeares sorrow did twist and grow,
And made a partie unawares for wo.

The three central verses not merely describe the 'woes'—sickness, the death of friends, disappointed hopes—they evoke with painful immediacy the feelings of the sufferer.

Sorrow was all my soul; I scarce beleeved,
Till grief did tell me roundly, that I lived.

---

[11]The earlier reading, in the Williams MS., is more explicit:

I looked on thy furniture so rich,
And made it rich to me:
Thy glorious houshold-stuffe did me bewitch
Into thy familie.

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With characteristic honesty Herbert admits the palliative of 'Academick praise'—something that temporarily 'dissolves' the mounting 'rage'; but the current of feeling is now flowing in a direction completely opposite to that of the opening.

> Whereas my birth and spirit rather took
> The way that takes the town;
> Thou didst betray me to a lingring book,
> And wrap me in a gown.
> I was entangled in the world of strife,
> Before I had the power to change my life.

'Betray' and 'entangle' make explicit a sense already present but not openly acknowledged in 'entice' and 'entwine'; and instead of direct spontaneity—'I had my wish and way'—there is division and uncertainty:

> I took thy sweetned pill, till I came where
> I could not go away, nor persevere.

In the eighth stanza the potentialities of emphasis latent in the spoken language are used to evoke the full sense of frustration and conflict:

> Yet lest perchance I should too happie be
> In my unhappinesse,
> Turning my purge to food, thou throwest me
> Into more sicknesses.
> Thus doth thy power crosse-bias me, not making
> Thine own gift good, yet me from my wayes taking.

Verse nine is quieter in tone, bringing into prominence an element in the whole complex attitude of the poet previously expressed only in the quiet control of the verse in which such turbulent feelings have been presented.

> Now I am here, what thou wilt do with me
> None of my books will show:
> I reade, and sigh, and wish I were a tree;
> For sure then I should grow
> To fruit or shade: at least some bird would trust
> Her houshold to me, and I should be just.

The opening lines of the last stanza can be read in two ways according as we bring into prominence the resigned or the rebellious tone:

> Yet, though thou troublest me, I must be meek;
> In weaknesse must be stout . . .

But resignation and rebellion are alike half-measures, and it is here, where the feelings are so subtly poised, that the need for an absolute decision makes itself felt. Return for a moment to the eighth stanza. There the last line, with its strong alliterative emphasis, makes plain that the problem of the will (*'my* wayes') is the central theme of the

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poem. What we call happiness ('no moneth but May') is the result of events meeting our desires—'I had my wish and way'; but the universe is not constructed on our plan, and when the will cannot bring itself to accept the cross-bias of existence frustration is inevitable. This commonplace is something that everyone admits in a general way; to accept it fully, in terms of our own personal experience, is another matter. It is because Herbert has faced the issues so honestly and completely that the first alternative that presents itself in the moment of decision has only to be brought into focus to be seen as no real solution at all; and it is because its rejection has behind it the whole weight of the poem that the sudden reversal of feeling is so unforced, the undivided acceptance of the ending so inevitable.

> Yet, though thou troublest me, I must be meek;
> In weaknesse must be stout.
> Well, I will change the service, and go seek
> Some other master out.
> Ah my deare God! though I am clean forgot,
> Let me not love thee, if I love thee not.

In *The Collar* the same problem is approached from a slightly different angle.

> I struck the board, and cry'd, No more.
> I will abroad.
> What? shall I ever sigh and pine?
> My lines and life are free; free as the rode,
> Loose as the winde, as large as store . . .
>
> But as I rav'd and grew more fierce and wilde
> At every word,
> Me thoughts I heard one calling, Child!
> And I reply'd, *My Lord.*

At one time I felt that in this well-known ending—a similar sudden 'return' to that of *Affliction* (i)—Herbert was evading the issue by simply throwing up the conflict and relapsing into the naïve simplicity of childhood. But of course I was wrong. The really childish behaviour is the storm of rage in which the tempestuous desires—superbly evoked in the free movement of the verse—are directed towards an undefined 'freedom'. What the poem enforces is that to be 'loose as the wind' is to be as incoherent and purposeless; that freedom is to be found not in some undefined 'abroad', but, in Ben Jonson's phrase, 'here in my bosom, and at home'.

The mature 'acceptance' that one finds in Herbert's poetry has, of course, little in common with a mere disillusioned resignation. The effort towards it is positive in direction. Just as Herbert shows no fear of any imposed punishment for sin—of Hell—but only of the inevitable consequences of sin's 'venome',[12] so the recurring stress of his poetry is on life. That 'nothing performs the task of life' is the complaint of *Affliction* (iv);

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O give me quicknesse, that I may with mirth
Praise thee brim-full

is his prayer when 'drooping and dull' (*Dulnesse*). And one reason why his religion appears so humane, in a century tending more and more to associate religion with fear and gloom, is that his God is a God of the living.

Wherefore be cheer'd, and praise him to the full
Each day, each houre, each moment of the week,
Who fain would have you be new, tender, quick.
(*Love Unknown*)

It is because he actually did learn from experience to find life 'at hand',[13] life realized in the commonplace details of every day, that so many of his 'homely' metaphors have such freshness and are the opposite of 'stuffy'. But acceptance has a further, final meaning. It involves the recognition not only of one's limited sphere but (the paradox is only apparent) of one's own value. It is this that gives such wide significance to the poem, 'Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back', placed deliberately at the end of the poems in 'The Church':

You must sit down, sayes Love, and taste my meat:
So I did sit and eat.

The achieved attitude—'accepted and accepting'— marks the final release from anxiety.

With this release not only is significance restored to the present ('Onely the present is thy part and fee . . .'[14]), but death is robbed of its more extreme terrors.[15] The ending of the poem, *Death* (which begins, 'Death, thou wast once an uncouth hideous thing') is entirely unforced:

Therefore we can go die as sleep, and trust
Half that we have
Unto an honest faithfull grave;
Making our pillows either down, or dust.

---

[12]See the second verse of the poem, *Nature,* in which it is not, I think, fanciful to see some resemblance to the far more searching analysis of evil in *Macbeth.*

[13] Poore man, thou searchest round
To finde out *death,* but missest *life* at hand. (*Vanitie* i)

[14]*The Discharge.*

[15]I should like to refer to D. W. Harding's review of *Little Gidding* in this journal (Spring, 1943): 'For the man convinced of spiritual values life is a coherent pattern in which the ending has its due place and, because it is part of a pattern, itself leads into the beginning. An over-strong terror of death is often one expression of the fear of living, for death is one of the life-processes that seem too terrifying to be borne'.

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The integration of attitude thus achieved lies behind the poetry of *Life* ('I made a posie while the day ran by'), and of the well-known *Vertue*—a poem that shows in a quite personal way the characteristically Metaphysical 'reconciliation of opposites': the day has lost none of its freshness because its end is freely recognized as implicit in its beginning. But it is in *The Flower* that the sense of new life springing from the resolution of conflict is most beautifully expressed.[16]

How fresh, O Lord, how sweet and clean
Are thy returns! ev'n as the flowers in spring;
To which, besides their own demean,
The late-past frosts tributes of pleasure bring.
Grief melts away
Like snow in May,
As if there were no such cold thing.

Who would have thought my shrivel'd heart
Could have recover'd greenesse? It was gone
Quite under ground; as flowers depart
To see their mother-root, when they have blown;
Where they together
All the hard weather,
Dead to the world, keep house unknown.

He still feels the need for security, for a guaranteed permanence:

O that I once past changing were,
Fast in thy Paradise, where no flower can wither.

But in the poem as a whole even the fact that the good hours do not last, that they are bound to alternate with 'frosts' and depression, is accepted without bitterness:

These are thy wonders, Lord of power,
Killing and quickning . . .

As a result the renewed vitality, waited for without fret or fuss, has something of the naturalness and inevitability of the mounting sap. The sixth stanza takes up the spring imagery:

And now in age I bud again,
After so many deaths I live and write;
I once more smell the dew and rain,
And relish versing: O my onely light,
It cannot be
That I am he
On whom thy tempests fell all night.

[16] I think it should be noticed that in the original order, apparently Herbert's own, *The Flower* is immediately preceded by *The Crosse*, another poem on the theme of acceptance, ending, *'Thy will be done'*.

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The sense of refreshment, conveyed in imagery of extraordinary sensuous delicacy, is as completely realized as the suffering expressed in the poems of conflict. And like the flower it comes from 'under ground', from the deeper levels of the personality.

The account I have given of the positive direction of Herbert's poetry is not meant to imply that anything like a continuous development can be traced in the poems, few of which can be dated with any precision.[17] In any case, development—when it is of the whole man, not simply of a line of thought—rarely shows the smooth curve that biographers like to imagine. We do know, however, that his life at Bemerton was one of uncommon sweetness and serenity, expressing what Dr. Hutchinson calls 'an achieved character of humility, tenderness, moral sensitiveness and personal consecration, which he was very far from having attained or even envisaged when he was dazzled by the attractions of the great world'. The poems in which the fluctuating stages of this progress are recorded are important human documents because they handle with honesty and insight questions that, in one form or another, we all have to meet if we wish to come to terms with life.

L. C. KNIGHTS.

[17]A few seem to be early work, some contain references to the priesthood, and poems that appear in the Bodleian, but not in the Williams, Manuscript may be assumed to be later than the others: see Dr. Hutchinson's Introduction, pp. l-lvi, and pp. lxvii-lxix. It is worth remarking that *The Pilgrimage, Vertue, Life* and *The Flower* are among the poems found only in the Bodleian MS.

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JOHNSON AS CRITIC

JOHNSON'S critical writings are living literature as Dryden's (for instance) are not: they compel, and they repay, a real and disinterested reading, that full attention of the judging mind which is so different an affair from the familiar kind of homage—from that routine endorsement of certified values and significances with which the good student, intent on examination-success, honours his set texts. Dryden too, it may be protested, deserves something better. No doubt; but to read Dryden critically can only serve to bring out, in the comparison with Johnson, the difference between classical documents and classical literature. Johnson's criticism, most of it, belongs with the living classics: it can be read afresh every year with unaffected pleasure and new stimulus. It is alive and life-giving.

One can say so much with confidence, and yet not be ready to say off-hand just what it is that gives Johnson's criticism its value What do we read it for? Not for enlightenment about the authors with whom it deals (though it may impart some), and not for direct instruction in critical thinking. We might perhaps say that we read it for the vigour and weight that it shares with all Johnson's writings—the vigour that comes from a powerful mind and a profoundly serious nature, and the weight that seems to be a matter of bringing to bear at every point the ordered experience of a lifetime. This, however, is too general an answer to be satisfying: Johnson's critical writings exhibit very notably the characteristic wisdom, force and human centrality of the great moralist, but they have also a value that is peculiarly of and for literary criticism—their specific interest is in and of that field. Johnson is always a great moralist, but in criticism he is a classic *qua* critic.

When we read him we know, beyond question, that we have here a powerful and distinguished mind operating at firsthand upon literature. This, we can say with emphatic conviction (the emphasis registering the rarity), really *is* criticism. The critic knows what he means and says it with unescapable directness and force ('deliberately, not dogmatically'), and what he says is clearly the expression of intense and relevant interest. This in itself, we can see, is enough to give Johnson's critical writings a distinctive value in the field of criticism, however difficult it may be to define and assess the profit to be got by frequenting them. They offer us that rare thing, the criticism of a qualified critic, for Johnson is decidedly and impressively that, whatever the limits of his qualifications.

And here, at this last prompting, we move towards a sharper definition of his peculiar interest and significance: they are conditioned by the very fact of his being limited—limited, as he is, so decidedly and specifically. The limitations are commonly both misunderstood and overstressed. He had defects of sensibility, we gather, analogous to his well-known myopia. This myopia, in fact,

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has been adduced as partly explaining and excusing his deplorable lack of sympathy with the more poetical developments in eighteenth-century poetry: he couldn't be interested in Nature since he couldn't see her beauties. Now that fashions in taste have changed, this particular physical incapacity is less likely to be invoked, but the 'defective ear' with which he is credited seems commonly to be thought of as an analogous incapacity afflicting this other organ: the ear has its defect as the eye its myopia. The analogy, of course, won't survive a moment's thought. Nevertheless, many who will recognize it at once to be absurd—disclaiming, perhaps, having ever entertained it—will not have thought of rejecting the implication (conveyed in the phrase) that Johnson's 'defective ear' is a matter of mere privation.

What is most striking about Johnson's 'ear', as about his other characteristics, is something positive. That 'ear' is the product of a training—a training in a positive taste. 'Taste' is a not altogether happy word, since it suggests something in the nature of a connoisseur's palate. The taste that matters is the operative sensibility, the discriminating 'touch', through which, in exploration and critical response, a fine and inclusive organization engages. Johnson's 'ear' is of that order. His training has been in a great positive tradition; a tradition so congenial to him, massively idiosyncratic as he is, that it takes on in him a highly personal quality. We see it as a literary tradition when we talk of 'taste' and 'ear', but its positiveness is a matter of its being so much more than literary: the very decided conventions of idiom and form engage comprehensive unanimities regarding morals, society and civilization. At no other period of English history have literary interests been governed by a literary tradition so positive. Johnson, an indubitably real critic, first-hand and forceful, writes from within it, and here we have the peculiar interest of his case.

The nature of the 'defect' of his 'ear' comes out plainly enough in his comments on Milton's blank verse:

> 'The musick of the English heroick line strikes the ear so faintly that it is easily lost, unless all the syllables of every line co-operate together: this co-operation can be only obtained by the preservation of every verse unmingled with another, as a distinct system of sound; and this distinctness is obtained and preserved by the artifice of rhyme. The variety of pauses, so much boasted by lovers of blank verse, changes the measures of an English poet to the periods of a declaimer; and there are only a few skilful and happy readers of Milton, who enable their audience to perceive where the lines end or begin. *Blank verse,* said an ingenious critick, *seems to be verse only to the eye.*
>
> Poetry may subsist without rhyme, but English poetry will not often please . . . Blank verse . . . has neither the easiness of prose, nor the melody of numbers, and therefore tires by long continuance . . . what reason could urge in its defence, has been confuted by the ear'.

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This seems final enough: blank verse, in theory and in practice, is deplorable. But—

> 'But, whatever be the advantage of rhyme, I cannot prevail on myself to wish that Milton had been a rhymer; for I cannot wish his work to be other than it is . . .'

Milton, that is, is powerful enough to prevail over the critic's training. The critic reports the resistance and the favourable judgment together, giving more space to the resistance, by way of bringing out the power of Milton's genius. Johnson's very positive training (for that is what the taste, or 'ear', of so disciplined a critic represents) impels him to ask for something that Milton doesn't offer, and he feels the impulsion even while acclaiming what Milton gives. We see the same thing in his remarks on Milton's diction:

> This novelty has been, by those who can find nothing wrong in Milton, imputed to his laborious endeavours after words suitable to the grandeur of his ideas. *Our language,* said Addison, *sunk under him.* But the truth is, that, both in prose and verse, he had formed his style by a perverse and pedantick principle. He was desirous to use English words with a foreign idiom. This in all his prose is discovered and condemned; for there the judgment operates freely, neither softened by the beauty, nor awed by the dignity of his thoughts; but such is the power of his poetry, that his call is obeyed without resistance, the reader feels himself in captivity to a higher and nobler mind, and criticism sinks in admiration'.

In this case the tension between acceptance and questioning criticism is likely to seem to most readers wholly respectable and unquaint. Johnson's strong Augustan training hasn't tended to disqualify him here, or to make just appreciation more difficult for him than it is for us. And, reverting to the question of blank verse, it is perhaps worth insisting on the force of that 'strong': Johnson represents the Augustan strength of eighteenth-century tradition. The author of *The Vanity of Human Wishes* has, as critic, no weakness—this will perhaps be generally recognized nowadays as a fair way of putting it—for the Miltonizing habit of his age: his taste is that of Goldsmith, who refers to 'the disgusting solemnity of blank verse'. But, faced with *Paradise Lost,* Johnson can tell the difference between Milton and eighteenth-century Miltonics, his distaste for which will hardly be urged against him as a disability: the passage quoted above in which he 'cannot prevail upon himself to wish that Milton had been a rhymer' concludes:

> 'yet, like other heroes, he is to be admired rather than imitated. He that thinks himself capable of astonishing, may write blank verse; but those that hope only to please, must condescend to rhyme'.

It is when we come to his treatment of *Lycidas* that we have something we can bluntly call disability, and the nature of it

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deserves to be precisely noted. His judgment is unhesitating and downright:

> 'the diction is harsh, the rhymes uncertain, and the numbers unpleasing. What beauty there is, we must therefore seek in the sentiments and images. It is not to be considered as the effusion of real passion; for passion runs not after remote allusions and obscure opinions . . . Where there is leisure for fiction there is little grief.
>
> In this poem there is no nature, for there is no truth; there is no art, for there is nothing new. Its form is that of a pastoral, easy, vulgar, and therefore disgusting: whatever images it can supply, are long ago exhausted; and its inherent improbability forces dissatisfaction on the mind'.

—The 'diction is harsh . . . the numbers unpleasing'; that looks like 'stark insensibility'. Whatever it is, it is not a mere lapse, provoked (say) by the content of the poem. Of the songs in *Comus*, a work of which Johnson approves, he says: 'they are harsh in their diction, if not very musical in their numbers'. Those surprising judgments, imputing 'harshness' and lack of 'music', are to be explained by reference to the cultivated predilection, the positive 'ear', with which they are correlated. It is the 'ear' critically formulated in Johnson's appraisal of the place in poetic history of Denham and Waller. The 'smoothness' and 'softness' of numbers ascribed to them are inseparably bound up with 'elegance' and 'propriety': 'it cannot be denied that he (Waller) added something to our elegance of diction, and something to our propriety of thought'. In the *Life* of Dryden Johnson tells us:

> 'The new versification, as it was called, may be considered as owing its establishment to Dryden; from whose time it is apparent that English poetry has had no tendency to relapse to its former savageness'.

A little earlier in the same *Life* we have had the predicate 'harsh' elucidated:

> 'There was therefore before the time of Dryden no poetical diction, no system of words at once refined from the grossness of domestick use, and free from the harshness of terms appropriated to particular arts. Words, too familiar, or too remote, defeat the purpose of a poet. From those sounds which we hear on small or on coarse occasions we do not easily receive strong impressions, or delightful images; and words to which we are nearly strangers, whenever they occur, draw that attention on themselves which they should transmit to things'.

—The 'ear', then, that judges *Lycidas* and the songs in *Comus* to be harsh in diction and unmusical is an organ that engages and brings to bear the whole complex of Augustan criteria. 'Elegance' and 'propriety' involve 'politeness'. Johnson's sense of 'music' carries with it inseparably a demand for the social movement and

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tone so characteristic of Augustan verse, and the demand for these is an implicit introduction of the associated norms, rational and moral.

> 'Poetical expression includes sound as well as meaning: *Musick*, says Dryden, *is inarticulate poetry;* among the excellences of Pope, therefore, must be mentioned the melody of his metre'. (*Life* of Pope).

But Johnson has no use for 'music' apart from meaning:

> 'From poetry the reader justly expects, and from good poetry always obtains, the enlargement of his comprehension and elevation of his fancy . . .' (*Life* of Waller).

There is always to be a substance of statement in verse, and it is fair to say that the music Johnson demands is a music of meaning as much as of sound. Of this passage of Waller's—

> O could I flow like thee, and make thy stream
> My great example, as it is my theme!
> Though deep, yet clear; though gentle, yet not dull;
> Strong without rage, without o'erflowing full

—a passage of which he tells us that it has been a model of versification 'for a century past', he says:

> 'So much meaning is comprised in so few words; the particulars of resemblance are so perspicaciously collected, and every mode of excellence separated from its adjacent fault by so nice a line of limitation; the different parts of the sentence are so accurately adjusted; and the flow of the last couplet is so smooth and sweet; that the passage, however celebrated, has not been praised above its merits'. (*Life* of Denham).

On the other hand, in the *Life* of Pope we find this significant note:

> 'I have been told that the couplet by which he declared his own ear to be most gratified, was this:
>
> Lo, where Maeotis sleeps, and hardly flows
> The freezing Tanais through a waste of snows.
>
> But the reason of this preference I cannot discover'.

—Johnson, that is, has no leaning towards the taste, so decidedly alive in the eighteenth century, for Spenserian-Tennysonian melodizing, the incantatory play of mellifluousness in which sense is subordinated.

When he comes to *Lycidas* he has no need to stop his ears against the music; the incantation, so acceptable to most of us, doesn't work for him—'the diction is harsh, the rhymes uncertain, and the numbers unpleasing'. The trained hearkening for another music has immunized him. He attends undistracted to the sense—attends critically, and we can't imagine him doing otherwise; which may be a limitation in him, but is certainly of the essence of his

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strength. The burden of *Paradise Lost* is such as to overcome all prepossessions against the kind of versification; the 'music' can overcome the trained 'ear'. Of *Comus* he can say:

> 'it exhibits . . . his power of description and his vigour of sentiment, employed in the praise and defence of virtue. A work more truly poetical is rarely found'.

But what does *Lycidas* yield if, as the duly responding reader does not, but Johnson must, we insist on reading it for its paraphrasable substance?

> 'We know that they never drove a field and that they had no flocks to batten; and though it be allowed that the representation may be allegorical, the true meaning is so uncertain and remote, that it is never sought because it cannot be known when it is found'.

> 'This poem has yet a grosser fault. With these trifling fictions are mingled the most awful and sacred truths such as ought never to be polluted with such irreverent combinations'.

It is difficult to see how, granted the approach, Johnson's essential criticism can be disposed of. The answer, of course, is that the approach is inappropriate and the poem a different kind of thing from any appreciable by Johnsonian criticism. One may perhaps add, in fairness to Johnson whose approach does at any rate promote this recognition, that it is a lesser thing than post-Johnsonian taste has tended to make it.

When we come to his treatment of Shakespeare, Johnson's limitations appear both more seriously disabling and more interesting, for his training gets more radically in the way of appreciation than where Milton is concerned. The critic for whom the Augustan use of language is the undisputed norm cannot come to terms with the Shakespearian use. He understands and he doesn't understand. He describes the Shakespearian use with characteristic strength and vivacity:

> 'It is incident to him to be now and then entangled with an unwieldy sentiment, which he cannot well express, and will not reject; he struggles with it a while, and if it continues stubborn, comprises it in words such as occur, and leaves it to be disentangled and evolved by those who have more leisure to bestow upon it'.
>
> 'Shakespeare regarded more the series of ideas, than of words'.[1]
>
> (*Preface*)

[1] *cf.* '. . . that fulness of idea, which might sometimes load his words with more sentiment than they could conveniently convey, and that rapidity of imagination . . .' *Proposals*.

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That such descriptions carry with them in Johnson's mind a severely adverse judgment we know well enough; the evidence abounds: 'the offspring of his throes is tumour, meanness, tediousness and obscurity': 'he has corrupted language by every mode of depravation'—it is easy to accumulate passages and tags of like import. Yet again and again the description itself, in its lively aptness, implies a measure of appreciation. This is most notably so in the well-known place in *The Rambler* where Johnson passes his strictures on lowness in *Macbeth*:

> 'Words which convey ideas of dignity in one age, are banished from elegant writing or conversation in another, because they are in time debased by vulgar mouths, and can be no longer heard without the involuntary recollection of unpleasing images.
>
> 'When Macbeth [the speaker is really Lady Macbeth] is confirming himself in the horrid purpose of stabbing his king, he breaks out amidst his emotions into a wish natural for a murderer:
>
> —Come, thick night!
> And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
> That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
> Nor Heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
> To cry, Hold, hold!
>
> 'In this passage is exerted all the force of poetry; that force which calls new powers into being, which embodies sentiment, and animates matter; yet, perhaps, scarce any man now peruses it without some disturbance of his attention from the counteraction of the words to the ideas'.

Johnson, of course, enforcing that 'counteraction' with particularized commentary, goes on to stigmatize the lowness of 'dun' ('an epithet now seldom heard but in the stable'), of 'knife' ('an instrument used by butchers and cooks in the meanest employments'), and of 'peeping through a blanket'. Yet when he concludes that 'in this passage is exerted all the force of poetry' he is not, for the sake of paradox, indulging in rhetorical licence. It is not his habit to use words lightly, and how much he means what he says comes out in what follows: 'that force which calls new powers into being, which embodies sentiment, and animates matter'. The felicity of these phrases is not accidental, and can we say that the critic who finds them when trying to express his sense of the peculiar exploratory creativeness and metaphorical concreteness of Shakespeare's poetry doesn't appreciate the Shakespearian use of language?

The potency of the training, the strong positiveness of the criteria, by virtue of which appreciation stultifies itself in an accompanying perversity of rejection appears the more strikingly. Nothing could be more unlike the Shakespearian use of English than that in which Johnson's mind and sensibility have been formed. For him, in this the type Augustan, expression in poetry as in prose is

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a matter of stating—of stating with point, elegance and propriety. It is significant that, asked for a definition of the 'wit' that is common to Pope (who of course has more than one kind and is more than an Augustan poet), Johnson, Goldsmith and Crabbe, together with the Gray of the *Impromptu* and the *Elegy* and the Cowper of *The Castaway,* one naturally replies in some such formula as this: 'a neatness and precision of *statement,* tending towards epigram'. When Johnson says that 'Shakespeare regarded more the series of ideas, than of words' he is thinking of the problems, grammatical and logical, with which Shakespeare in his mature styles confronts the analyst. What D. W. Harding says of Rosenberg's handling of language (see *Scrutiny,* Vol. III, No. 4) applies to Shakespeare's—it is, in fact, the essentially poetic use:

> 'He—like many poets in some degree, one supposes—brought language to bear on the incipient thought at an earlier stage of its development. Instead of the emerging idea being racked slightly so as to fit a more familiar approximation of itself, and words found for *that,* Rosenberg let it manipulate words almost from the beginning, often without the controls of logic and intelligibility'.

Shakespeare's 'thoughts', concretely realized moments in the development of the dramatic poem (itself a marvellously concrete and complex whole) are apt to be highly specific and, so, highly complex—which is to say, compressed and licentious in expression: hence the occasions for Johnson's vigours and rigours of censure. The Augustan cannot conceive the need for such a use of language. The ideas he wants to express are adequately provided for—and this is true of poetry as of prose—in the common currency of terms, put together according to the conventions of grammar and logic. He doesn't feel that the current concepts of ordinary discourse muffle or misrepresent anything he has to convey. His business is, while observing the ordinary rules in arranging them, to achieve further a formal pattern of meaning-structure and versification. He can express himself congenially in modes that are in such a sense and at such a level social that this pattern (like Augustan idiom itself) suggests formal conventions of social manners and public deportment. It is an age in which everyone of any cultivation knows so well what Reason, Truth and Nature, the presiding trinity, are that no one feels any pressing need of definitions (and here we have an essential mark of a strong positive culture). It is not an age in which the poet feels called on to explore further below the public surface than conventional expression takes cognizance of, or to push in any way beyond the frontiers of the charted. He has no impulse to indulge in licentious linguistic creation, nor does it occur to him that such indulgence may ever with any propriety be countenanced.

And what, in such a convention, makes the poet's compositions poetry? The pattern, primarily—the extremely formal pattern which, involving metre, rhyme and sense-organization, involves so much and asserts itself so dominatingly. It virtually involves the

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decorum that might have been listed as a separate head; the decorum that Johnson vindicates in his commentary on the passage of *Macbeth*. Given movement, tone and idiom so essentially suggestive of formal deportment and company manners it is not surprising that the obligatory decorum should be so delicate and intolerant, and the 'low' it cannot abide be stigmatized so arbitrarily (it must seem to us).

There is, where Johnsonian Augustanism is concerned, a third head to be added, that of generality—the peculiar kind of generality prescribed in the well-known passage of *Rasselas*:

> ' "The business of a poet", said Imlac, "is to examine, not the individual, but the species; to remark general properties and large appearances. He does not number the streaks of the tulip or describe the different shades in the verdure of the forest; he is to exhibit in his portraits of nature, such striking and prominent features, as recall the original to every mind; and must neglect the minuter discriminations, which one may have remarked, and another have neglected, for those characteristics which are alike obvious to vigilance and to carelessness".'

Pope, of course, can be particular enough, but there is only one Pope, and, although *the* great Augustan, he transcends Augustanism too much to be the type Augustan, and it is fairly plain as the eighteenth century wears on that Augustanism tends inherently towards this generality, the relation of which to decorum comes out clearly in Johnson's censure of 'dun', 'knife', and 'blanket'. The relation appears again in this significantly phrased stricture on Cowley:

> 'The fault of Cowley, and perhaps of all the writers of the metaphysical race, is that of pursuing his thoughts to their last ramification, by which he loses the grandeur of generality; for of the greatest things the parts are little; what is little can be but pretty, and by claiming dignity becomes ridiculous'.

More radically, a thoroughgoing rejection of the Shakespearian use of language, and, consequently, of all concrete specificity in the rendering of experience, would seem very much to imply the quest of a compensating poetic generality. Johnson remarks (again in the *Life* of Cowley):

> 'Great thoughts are always general, and consist in positions not limited by exceptions, and in descriptions not descending to minuteness . . . . Those writers who lay on the watch for novelty could have little hope of greatness; for great things cannot have escaped former observation'.

—They should have known that the poet can only aim at achieving, in the 'grandeur of generality', *What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd*.

Remembering *The Vanity of Human Wishes* one hesitates to say that this use of language is essentially unpoetic—though the essentially poetic is certainly the Shakespearian, its antithesis. What

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one can, however, say is that the use Johnson favours and practises —the only use he really understands—is essentially undramatic. And here we have his radical limitation as a critic of the drama, and his radical incapacity as a dramatist (he being in both respects representative of his age). We may see the *literary* bias expressed in his characteristic formula, 'A dramatick exhibition is a book recited with concomitants that increase or diminish the effect', as, in an age in which elevated drama (by Shakespeare or by Home) is an opportunity for Garrick, and declamatory histrionic virtuosity the best the theatre has to offer, wholly respectable. The assumption that a work of art in words is to be judged as literature has in any case much to be said for it, whatever complications unrecognized by Johnson may attend on the qualifying 'dramatic'. Yet, as I have remarked before in these pages, when one re-reads *Irene*—so patently conceived as a book to be recited, and leaving so wholly to the concomitants the hopeless task of making it a theatre-piece—one realizes that, nevertheless, 'literary bias' misses what is most interesting in Johnson's case. That he has no sense of the theatre, and worse, that he cannot present or conceive his themes dramatically—these criticisms one doesn't need to urge. The point one finds oneself making is that his essential bent is undramatic in a sense that goes far deeper than the normal interest of the 'dramatic critic'. The weakness of *Irene* sends one back to consider the nature of the strength of his best verse.

The Vanity of Human Wishes is great poetry; but it is in a mode that, above, just escaped being called essentially unpoetic: it is certainly as undramatic as good poetry can be. Johnson—and in this he is representative of his age—has neither the gift nor the aim of catching in words and presenting to speak for themselves significant particularities of sensation, perception and feeling, the significance coming out in complex total effects, which also are left to speak for themselves; he starts with general ideas and general propositions, and develops them by discussion, comment and illustration. The failure in dramatic conception so patent in *Irene* is correlated with the essential qualities of *The Vanity of Human Wishes*. When he attempts drama, the conditions that enable Johnson in his characteristic poetry of statement, exposition and reflection to give his moral declamation the weight of lived experience and to charge his eighteenth-century generalities with that extraordinary and characteristic kind of concreteness—

> Unnumber'd suppliants crowd Preferment's gate,
> Athirst for wealth, and burning to be great;
> Delusive Fortune hears th' incessant call,
> They mount, they shine, evaporate, and fall

—these conditions fail him. In blank verse the wit and the patterned social movement are absent, and with them the Johnsonian weight. His characters declaim eloquent commonplaces—he cannot make them do anything else, but the dramatic aim has robbed them of the familiar strength and substance; the great moralist, reduced to

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making a show of speaking through his *personae*, is less than himself.

The point I am making is that Johnson's limitations as a critic have positive correlatives. But they are not the less limitations, and seriously disabling ones. With his radically undramatic habit we may reasonably associate his bondage to moralistic fallacy—his censure of Shakespeare's indifference to poetic justice and Shakespeare's general carelessness about the duty to instruct:

> 'His first defect is that to which may be imputed most of the evil in books or in man. He sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct, that he seems to write without any moral purpose. From his writings indeed a system of social duty may be selected, for he that thinks reasonably must think morally; but his precepts and axioms drop casually from him; he makes no just distribution of good or evil, nor is always careful to shew in the virtuous a disapprobation of the wicked; he carries his persons indifferently through right and wrong, and at the close dismisses them without further care, and leaves their examples to operate by chance. This fault the barbarity of his age cannot extenuate; for it is always a writer's duty to make the world better, and justice is a virtue independent on time and place'.

—Not really appreciating the poetry he cannot appreciate the dramatic organization; more generally, he cannot appreciate the ways in which not only Shakespeare's drama but all works of art *act* their moral judgments. For Johnson a thing is stated, or it isn't there.

It is as well, perhaps, to insist on the inability to appreciate Shakespearian poetry—for in spite of the stress laid above on the paradoxical kind of appreciation Johnson shows in describing, inability is what, in sum, we have to recognize. Corroboration, if it were needed, is to be seen in the taste for declamatory eloquence exemplified in his starring of the passage from *The Mourning Bride* (in the *Life* of Congreve): 'If I were required to select from the whole mass of English poetry the most poetical paragraph, I know not what I could prefer . . .' The paragraph is eighteenth-century eloquence of a kind that Johnson's own account suggests well enough:

> 'He who reads these lines enjoys for a moment the powers of a poet; he feels what he remembers to have felt before, but he feels it with great increase of sensibility; he recognizes a familiar image, but he meets it again amplified and expanded, embellished with beauty, and enlarged with majesty'.

This incapacity of Johnson's involves, in the criticism of Shakespearian drama, limitations more disabling than his moralism. He ranks Shakespeare's genius supremely high, of course, but it is interesting to note where he lays the stress:

> 'Shakespeare is above all writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of nature; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirrour of manners and of life'.

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> 'This therefore is the praise of Shakespeare, that his drama is the mirrour of life; that he who has mazed his imagination in following the phantoms which other writers raise up before him, may here be cured of his delirious extasies, by reading human sentiments in human language, by scenes from which a hermit may estimate the transactions of the world, and a confessor predict the progress of the passions'. (*Preface*).

—What Johnson acclaims in Shakespeare, it might be said, is a great novelist who writes in dramatic form (and this, if we add an accompanying stress on the bard who provides opportunities for histrionic declamation, is the eighteenth-century attitude in general). To use the time-honoured phrase, he values Shakespeare—and extols him in admirably characteristic terms—for his 'knowledge of the human heart'; and the *Preface to Shakespeare* should be a *locus classicus* for the insufficiency of an appreciation of Shakespeare's 'knowledge of the human heart' that is not at the same time an appreciation of the poetry. That Johnson's mode of exhibiting such insufficiency is 'period' doesn't make the illustrative and monitory value of the relation to Bradley's less, but the reverse; and now that Bradley's itself begins to look 'period' to Professor Dover Wilson[2] there are more recent modes that can be brought into the critical series.[3]

Johnson's case is clear enough: the radical insufficiency correlated with his abstraction of the 'drama' from the 'poetry'—with his failure to see the dramatic genius as a poetic and linguistic genius—appears when he exalts the comedies above the tragedies:

> 'He therefore indulged his natural disposition, and his disposition, as Rhymer has remarked, led him to comedy. In tragedy he often writes, with great appearance of toil and study, what is written at last with little felicity; but in his comick scenes, he seems to produce without labour, what no labour can improve. In tragedy he is always struggling after some occasion to be comick; but in comedy he seems to repose, or to luxuriate, as in a mode of thinking congenial to his nature. In his tragick scenes there is always something wanting, but his comedy often sur-

[2]See *The Fortunes of Falstaff* (C.U.P., 6/-). Professor Dover Wilson exposes here, for an awe-struck public of scholars and academics, the ineptitude of the Bradleyan approach. So the work of the past fifteen years, if it still goes unrecognized, has not been without its effect even in the inner strongholds. It is fair to add that the book gives an intelligent, if rather redundant, account of the two plays involved.

[3]In the last decade recent critical advances were recognized at Cambridge in this formulation of a subject for a prize-essay: *The Use of Poetry in Shakespeare's Plays*. Professor Wilson Knight, the followers of Caroline Spurgeon, the investigators of archetypal patterns, and the promoters of the mediaeval Shakespeare, all need to be reminded of the bearings that Johnson's case has for them.

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passes expectation or desire. His comedy pleases by the thoughts and the language, and his tragedy for the greater part by incident and action. His tragedy seems to be skill, his comedy to be instinct'.

It is quite unequivocal. A couple of pages further on in the *Preface* he reverts to the theme; there is no need to quote again. The appreciation of Shakespeare's dramatic genius—of his 'knowledge of the human heart' and his depth and range in rendering life—that exalts the comedies above the tragedies is a calamitously defective appreciation.

The gross obviousness of the defect goes with the very strength of Johnson's criticism. What he says of Shakespeare might be adapted to himself as critic:

> 'Shakespeare, whether life or nature be his subject, shews plainly, that he has seen with his own eyes; he gives the image which he receives, not weakened or distorted by the intervention of any other mind[4]; the ignorant feel his representations to be just, and the learned see that they are compleat'.

Johnson is not invariably just or complete; but the judgment—and he never fails to judge—is always stated with classical force and point, and based beyond question on strong firsthand impressions. He addresses himself deliberately and disinterestedly to what is in front of him; he consults his experience with unequivocal directness and always has the courage of it. Concerned as he is for principle, he refers with characteristic contempt to 'the cant of those who judge by principles rather than perception' (*Life* of Pope). There is always, he says, 'an appeal open from criticism to nature' (*Preface*) and:

> 'It ought to be the first endeavour of a writer to distinguish nature from custom; or that which is established because it is right, from that which is right only because it is established'.

It is significant that for 'nature' he tends to substitute the term 'experience'. For instance, in the number of *The Rambler* (156) from which the last extract comes, having adduced the orthodox objection to 'tragi-comedy', he asks:

> 'But will not experience show this objection to be rather subtile than just? Is it not certain that the tragick and comick affections have been moved alternately with equal force; and that no plays have oftener filled the eye with tears, and the breast with palpitation, than those which are variegated with interludes of mirth?'

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[4]Contrast this, on Milton: 'But his images and descriptions of the scenes or operations of Nature do not seem to be always copied from original form, nor to have the freshness, raciness, and energy of immediate observation. He saw Nature, as Dryden expresses it, *through the spectacles of books;* and on most occasions calls learning to his assistance.

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—The 'mingled drama' has succeeded in practice, and that would seem to dispose of the rules. It is true that Johnson then draws back:

> 'I do not however think it safe to judge of works of genius merely by the event'.

He is not prepared to say that success is necessarily self-justifying: there is always principle to be considered. And he goes on to suggest that 'perhaps the effects even of Shakespeare's poetry might have been yet greater, had he not counteracted himself', but kept the rules. This is pretty obviously a formal conservative scruple rationalizing itself. Yet there is nothing timid about Johnson's appeal to experience, and the relation in his criticism between experience and authority (predisposed as he is to the idea of authority) has nothing in common with that reconciliation between Nature and the Rules which Pope, representative here of last-phase Neo-classicism, effects with such elegant ease in his *Essay*. In fact, Johnson's recourse to experience is so constant and uncompromising and so subversive of Neo-classic authority that it is misleading to bring him under the Neo-classic head.

The strength and the limitations together, in criticism, of Johnsonian 'experience' come out best of all, perhaps, in his treatment of the Unities. Here the terms are downright and the dismissal blunt (*Preface*):

> 'Such is the triumphant language with which a critick exults over the misery of an irregular poet, and exults commonly without resistance or reply. It is time therefore to tell him by the authority of Shakespeare, that he assumes, as an unquestionable principle, a position which, while his breath is forming it into words, his understanding pronounces to be false. It is false, that any representation is mistaken for reality; that any dramatick fable in its materiality was ever credible, or, for a single moment, was ever credited'.
>
> 'The truth is, that the spectators are always in their senses, and know, from the first act to the last, that the stage is only a stage, and that the players are only players. They came to hear a certain number of lines recited with just gesture and elegant modulation. The lines relate to some action, and an action must be in some place; but the different actions that compleat a story may be in places very remote from each other; and where is the absurdity of allowing that space to represent first Athens, and then Sicily, which was always known to be neither Sicily nor Athens, but a modern theatre?'

This kind of commonsense, being commonsense and a real resort to experience, is adequate to the dismissal of so unreal a structure as the doctrine of the Unities. But of course, for a satisfactory account of the experience of the theatre more is needed: 'that the spectators are always in their senses' is an incomplete truth, and

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misleading in its incompleteness. And even if Johnson had found the theatre more congenial than he does we shouldn't have looked to him for anything of adequate subtlety—anything of the order of 'that willing suspension of disbelief which constitutes poetic faith'. The subtlety of analysis that Coleridge, with his psychological inwardness, is to bring into criticism is not at Johnson's command. But it can be said that Johnson, with his rational vigour and the directness of his appeal to experience, represents the best that criticism can do before Coleridge.

The deficient analysis has an obvious manifestation in his moralism. It leads also to his appearing sometimes to be exhibiting his moralistic disability where the appearance is deceptive, being imposed by the idiom he cannot escape.

'The end of writing is to instruct; the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing'. (*Preface*).

—This way (not invented by Johnson) of resolving the dilemma represented by the traditional question, 'Is it the business of art to please or instruct?', doesn't bring emancipation from the false analysis that the question involves. He knows, as his critical practice unfailingly exemplifies, that his business when faced with a set of verses is to judge whether they are good poetry or not, and that this is a different matter from judging whether they are salutary as instruction: he knows that something more is involved. But, admirably preoccupied as he is with technical examinations and judgments of sensibility, he can't, when asked what this something more is, rise above—or go deeper than—an answer in terms of 'please'. Pleasure added to instruction: that, though his perception transcends it, is the analysis to which the critical idiom he inevitably uses is tied. When he has occasion to insist on the serious function of poetry, the vocabulary of 'instruction' is his inevitable resort.

In the *Life* of Gray, for instance, we read:

> 'To select a singular event, and swell it to a giant's bulk by fabulous appendages of spectres and predictions, has little difficulty, for he that forsakes the probable may always find the marvellous. And it has little use: we are affected only as we believe; we are improved only as we find something to be imitated or declined. I do not see that *The Bard* promotes any truth, moral or political'.

This might be taken for a clear instance of the most indefensible didacticism. Yet the context—indeed, the tone of the passage itself—makes it plain enough that what we have here is Johnson's way of saying that for a mature, accomplished and cultivated mind such as Gray's to be playing this kind of game and exhibiting itself in these postures is ridiculous. It will be noted that his criticism proceeds by way of commonsense analysis[5] to a final dismissing judgment of sensibility:

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'These Odes are marked by glittering accumulations of ungraceful ornaments; they strike, rather than please; the images are magnified by affectation; the language is laboured into harshness. The mind of the writer seems to work with unnatural violence. *Double, double, toil and trouble.* He has a kind of strutting dignity, and is tall by walking on tiptoe. His art and his struggle are too visible, and there is too little appearance of ease and nature'.

The judgment is surely unanswerable. Johnson is a better critic of eighteenth-century poetry than Matthew Arnold. In dealing with that, at any rate, he has an advantage in his training. To be trained in so positive a tradition is to have formed strong anticipations as to the kind of discrimination one will have to make, and within the field to which the anticipations are relevant they favour quickness of perception and sureness of judgment. (An analogy: the 'native' tracker owes his skill not to a natural endowment of marvellously good sight, but to analogous anticipations: knowing the kind of thing to look for he is quick to perceive, and being habituated to the significances of the various signs, he is quick to appraise and interpret). Johnson's disapproval of Gray's Pindarick sublimities goes with his disapproval of Miltonics. For him—and who to-day will disagree?—Miltonics represent the weakness of taste in his age. Now that we no longer search the eighteenth century for what is congenial to Victorian-romantic taste—for poetry from the 'soul'—we can see that the Pindarick ambition consorts with the same weakness. Drawing inspiration from the Miltonic side of Dryden, it applies resonant externalities of declamation to conventional ideas of the exalted. What Johnson singles out for praise is Gray's Augustan classic—for the *Elegy* is Augustan in its strength: it has Augustan movement, and the accompanying Augustan virtues of neat, compact and dignified statement. The terms in which he extols it are significant:

'The *Churchyard* abounds with images which find a mirrour in every mind, and with sentiments to which every bosom returns an echo. The four stanzas beginning *Yet even these bones,* are to me original: I have never seen the notions in any other place; yet he that reads them here, persuades himself that he has always

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[5] *e.g.*: 'The *weaving* of the *winding* sheet he borrowed, as he owns, from the northern Bards; but the texture, however, was very properly the work of female powers, as the art of spinning the thread of life in another mythology. Theft is always dangerous; Gray has made weavers of slaughtered bards, by a fiction outrageous and incongruous. They are then called upon to *Weave the warp,* and *weave the woof,* perhaps, with no great propriety; for it is by crossing the *woof* with the *warp* that men *weave* the *web* or piece; and the first line was dearly bought by the admission of its wretched correspondent, *Give ample room and verge enough.* He has, however, no other line as bad'.

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felt them. Had Gray written often thus, it had been vain to blame, and useless to praise him'.

—These stanzas, Johnson judges, have the virtues of *What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd*: that is, he extols the *Elegy* as classical statement—as giving moving and inevitable form to the human commonplaces.

His treatment of Gray, who has not even yet fully emerged from the Arnoldian transfiguration, has counted for much in the traditional notion of the arbitrary Great Cham of criticism, narrow, dogmatic and intolerant. Actually, it illustrates his excellence as a critic of eighteenth-century verse.

In stressing Johnson's sureness and penetration within the limits of the field to which his training properly applies, it will not do to suggest that his distinction as a critic is confined within those limits. The truth is far otherwise. How notably he transcends them in discussing Shakespeare has already been suggested, and admirers of the *Preface* (not the only relevant document) know that there is much more to adduce. Perhaps the most striking demonstration of his uninhibited versatility of critical response is to be found in his *Life* of Cowley. That he should pick on Cowley as the best of the Metaphysicals—'Cowley adapted it [the 'metaphysick style'], and excelled his predecessors, having as much sentiment, and more musick'—is, of course, an instance of Augustan limitation: Cowley is nearer than the others, and, in his transitional quality, which relates him more closely to Dryden and Rochester than to Donne, more accessible to Augustan sympathy. But on the other hand it has to be recognized that, as a Metaphysical, he deserves no more than Johnson concedes; so far as he is concerned, the estimate is just:

> 'Yet great labour, directed by great abilities, is never wholly lost: if they frequently threw away their wit upon false conceits, they likewise sometimes struck out unexpected truth: if their conceits were far-fetched, they were often worth the carriage. To write on their plan, it was at least necessary to read and think. No man could be born a metaphysical poet, nor assume the dignity of a writer, by descriptions copied from descriptions, by imitations borrowed from imitations, by traditional imagery, and hereditary similes, by readiness of rhyme, and volubility of syllables'.

—It is not for 'period' disabilities that the eighteenth-century critic who writes this seems most remarkable. And the free and powerful intelligence compels recognition in the whole immediately accompanying discussion of Metaphysical characteristics. So powerful an intelligence, associated with so intense an interest both in letters and in human nature, could no more be narrow than shallow. Here is a concluding example of Johnson's quality:

> 'To his domesticks [Swift] was naturally rough; and a man of rigorous temper, with that vigilance of minute attention which his works discover, must have been a master that few could bear'.

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In spite of what was said in the opening of this essay, such a passage might very well be pondered for the illumination it throws on the 'works'. The implications constitute a very salutary corrective for the still current sentimentalization of Swift.

F. R. LEAVIS.

TOWARDS A CONCEPTION OF MUSICAL TRADITION (II):

VOICE AND DANCE IN THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES

(II)

V.

I said early on that the triumph of sixteenth century technique contained latent in it the seeds of its destruction. It is this process—which is also the end of the mediaeval world—that we have now to examine. Broadly speaking there are two aspects of it, which became related; one of them purly destructive, the other re-creative. The destructive aspect is the phenomenon known as chromaticism; the re-creative one is the increasing influence of the dance.

The emergence of chromaticism we have already referred to in our discussion of the inflectional nature of sixteenth century tonality; and we also saw how the association of chromaticism with specifically harmonic expressive effects was evidence of latent dramatic tendencies which in general sixteenth century composers weren't interested in exploiting. Quite apart from chromaticism there is an undoubted feeling for what we would call 'harmonic' expression in many of the purely chordal passages. The famous triads at the opening of Palestrina's *Stabat Mater* are certainly the consequence of pure part-writing, and melodic in technique; but I think there can be little doubt that the composer used that particular kind of extremely simple note-for-note part-writing because he wanted the peculiarly solemn harmonic effect which is produced by that succession of melodically rather than harmonically related triads, with their supple elusive rhythm. It is easy to see that in passages in which the chromatically inflected semitones appear the most astonishing relations between triads could occur, relations which are the more subtle and surprising as the parts overlap. As Peter Warlock has pointed out, their effect was entirely towards

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the destruction of the vocally founded modal system and not at all (as the history books used to suggest) in the direction of the new diatonicism. They led rather to 'the modern juxtaposition of diatonically remote chords in a sequence that is logically justified by a thread of melody'. The possibilities were no doubt first realized through the continual juxtaposition of major and minor thirds in false relation ; and most of the composers, particularly Marenzio, Weelkes, Dowland and Lasso, achieved effects of tremendous intensity through the distortions and modifications of a vocal texture occasioned by an intertwined chromatic scale part. Such passages were of course always exceptional, and in church music very rare ; in secular music they were always associated with highly charged emotional conceptions such as grief, love, pain, etc., and were essentially short-lived. The main effect of chromaticism is to break down the long flowing vocal line characteristic of the sixteenth century polyphony ; to splinter the vocal modality into chromatic fragments which concentrate attention on the poignant incidental harmonic drama. Significantly Lasso, who used chromaticism quite a lot in the middle of his life, discarded it from his most mature work and returned to the traditional vocal methods. The noble mellifluous line of a Palestrina mass or the intense grandeur of a mass of Byrd are remote from the violence of chromaticism which, intensely personal and usually very melancholy, emphasizes the individual passionate drama of harmony and tends to reduce melody to the condition of declamation. Sixteenth century polyphony had grown up as the sublimation of speech intonation into lyricism ; through chromaticism the lyrical line again disrupts ; but backed by harmony the disrupted line becomes the vehicle for the new humanistic impulses. Chromaticism is a phenomenon which seems to occur when civilizations are in a transitional phase. We find the supreme Renaissance representative of it in Gesualdo, Prince of Venosa, who epitomises the breakdown of modalism and the mediaeval order just as Wagner and Delius, two other harmonic-chromatic composers whose work is remarkable for its indefiniteness of melodic contour, epitomise the breakdown of diatonicism and the civilization of the modern world. (Warlock cites some amazingly close parallel passages from the three composers). Gesualdo's astonishing music shows a superlative gift for the wailing fervent phrase and for audacious strings of inflectionally coloured harmonies (chromaticism, the theorists held, literally gave 'colour' to music) which are related only by the most tenuous enharmonic tied note or sometimes (like Delius's) by nothing at all except the continuity of 'feeling'. But these phrases are not seen, as are Weelkes' and Marenzio's chromaticisms or those in the marvellous lute fancies of Dowland, in relation to a wider vocal context. They are in essence dramatic, fragmentary, even operatic. They are related not so much to the great polyphonists as to the new technique of Monteverdi, with its passionate declamation and vivid 'vertical' harmonies in which abrupt contrasts of tonality (presaging 'shape' music) are used for explicitly dramatic effect. The choral version of Monte-

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verdi's *Lasciate mi morire* is quite close in method to the madrigals of Gesualdo, but it accomplishes with great lyrical power, poise and maturity what Gesualdo was merely tentatively feeling towards. Despite its assured mastery of traditional polyphonic technique its attitude manifests a definite breach with the past. There can be little doubt that Monteverdi's example taught some of the later English composers, especially Weelkes in such a miracle as 'O Care thou wilt despatch me', how the *dramatic* potentialities of chromaticism were not irreconciliable with the old methods, even though such a compromise must prove ultimately abortive.

Significantly Gesualdo's music is so unvocal in its transitions that it seems probable that it must have been sung with instrumental doubling; it has even been suggested that Gesualdo may have been the first composer to compose 'at the keyboard', a procedure which would have been unthinkable to Palestrina or Byrd or Bach, whose 'feeling' was always inseparable from craftsmanship. Gesualdo is the first 'romantic', the ultimate triumph over the mediaeval attitudes of the more individualistic attitudes of Renaissance culture. Man, with his passions and desires, has become the centre of his universe rather than a contributory cog in the universe of God. Perhaps we may say that opera—the conscious discovery of the relation between music and language (and therefore life)—became necessary only when the more intuitive relation between life and speech, speech and poetry, poetry and song, characteristic of the earlier 'religious' society, had all but passed away.[8] At any rate one of the main motives behind the seventeenth century operatic venture was the desire to make the words expressive and audible, conversational, rather than lost in the mazes of outmoded polyphony. Maybe men like Caccini and Peri, with their rather pedestrian declamation, didn't realize that sixteenth century polyphony was perhaps the most successful solution of the speech-song relation which has ever been achieved. Yet in a sense of course they were right; the time had come for a change because the temper of life had changed. Seventeenth century operatic declamation was the first of European music's returns to contemporary speech (we are witnessing another today); out of it Monteverdi and later Purcell were to evolve the new lyrical efflorescence—which at the same time did not altogether forget the old. It is interesting to note that whereas Gesualdo's latently operatic

[8] *Cf.* Jeppesen: 'The older music (musica mondana) has a quality that seems to open out on the universe, something cosmic. It is as though the music frees itself of individualistic bonds, glides away and dissolves into space. Of the newer music (musica humana) it might be figuratively said that it also strikes against the limits of the individual but is hurled back on itself and condensed into the individually characteristic. The tension arising from the process finds its resolution in the accent (in its extreme form the free dissonance). The epochs separate at this point for only the new music has the violent, vehement emphasis'.

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chromaticism not only broke down the old order but also helped to release the impulses which were to achieve a new social formalization through the interoperation of the new dance shapes, culminating in the great 'social 'structure of the eighteenth century sonata; Wagner's chromaticism takes the wheel full circle, and here an essentially dramatic, theatrical art attempts once more to establish *religious* and textural significance. In Gesualdo we see the transition from vocal melody to harmony, from the church and the communal conception to the stage and the individual conception, effected more or less unconsciously; in Wagner we see the individual Ego (only a capitalized one seems adequate) consciously striving to attain a cultus of religious validity. A Palestrina Mass and Wagner's *Parsifal* are thus the absolute inverse of each other. In the Palestrina the unfolding vocal lines make the harmony, the 'personal' expression; in *Parsifal* an attempt is deliberately made to derive a 'new polyphony' from the basic surge of harmonic feeling and the passion of the individual by 'spreading out' chromatic chord formations into indeterminate linear motives. Wagner's harmonically generative music, as against the melodically generative music of Palestrina, was the inevitable consequence of the nineteenth century's increasing preoccupation with the individual, the attempt to find him a *raison d'être* now that the social hierarchy of the eighteenth century had crumbled. The prelude to *Tristan* is a formal discovery which as far as it goes is unanswerable; however we may feel that it represents a catastrophic decline of civilization compared with the Palestrina, we cannot dispute its amazing genius.

VI.

Chromaticism marks the emergence of the 'dramatic' instinct but only through association with the dance do the new individualistic attitudes achieve formal coherence. The increasing influence of the dance on polyphonic technique was to some extent fostered by the extremely homogeneous imitative entries of the lighter madrigals, because the answering of voices inevitably implies a technique in which is latent the harmonic idea of sequence. This is not often the case in the long fluid melodies of the church music but is distinctly noticeable in Wilbye's superb *Draw on Sweet Night*, which is mainly diatonic, though very plastically so: still more is it noticeable in fugal madrigals, like those of Morley and Jones, with relatively brief and pithy subjects, and in the vocal-cum-instrumental technique of Byrd's six-part string Fantasia. Such things as these provide a link between polyphonic technique and the more or less symmetrical dance-songs and dances proper. This was important because, as we saw in the first section, the possibility of harmonic sequence and modulation was alone to make possible the extension of dance pieces into musical compositions which could challenge the polyphonic motets in range and seriousness of purpose. Chromaticism brought home the dramatic potentialities of harmony; the dance shapes were to indicate how these dramatic harmonies could be given formal significance.

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The link was effected through the development of solo song with instrumental accompaniment. Very early there was manifested a natural tendency in the simpler strophic dance songs for the interest to become centred melodically in the top line, the other lines making perfectly good part writing and being always interesting in themselves to play or sing, but fulfilling a subservient function in the whole scheme—a tendency encouraged by the simpler folk dance variations in which the tunes were often diatonic (or strictly speaking Ionian). Many of the exquisite French *chansons*—the work of men like de Costeley, du Caurroy, and Bertram—were habitually sung either chorally or by a solo voice with the other parts played on viols and recorders (a medium of great purity and delicacy). The combination of extremely simple, balanced dance structure with traces of the customary rhythmic and modal plasticity gives these songs a kind of virginal tenderness, combined with an aristocratic sophistication, which is peculiarly moving, and which is not exactly paralleled by the dainty elegance of the English ballets and fa-las, also designated as being 'apt for voices or viols'. (Originally of course the ballets were literally danced songs or sung dances).

Gradually, as the interest increasingly centred in the top line, the lower parts became less melodically defined and (which was still more important) the character of the main line itself became slightly modified. This is particularly noticeable in the songs which Thomas Whythorne published in 1571. A big contrapuntal piece such as *Since I embrace the heavenly grace*, though diatonic is clearly in the old tradition and can be adequately performed only with the polyphonic chorus ; but songs like *It doth belong more of good right* and *As the Shadow* are equally clearly solo lyrical *tunes*, with accompanying parts, and the tunes themselves, while having their roots in English folk-song (Warlock pointed out the resemblance between *As the Shadow* and *Greensleeves*) seem to point forward to the great 'shape' composers of the early eighteenth century. They have indeed a magnificent sweep and majesty, completely diatonic with clearly defined modulations to the dominant and an architectural balance of clause against clause which though in a sense fresher in feeling, one might almost call Handelian. They are simple and noble and *easily memorable* ; tunes rather than the highly subtle and unobtrusive melodic lines of sixteenth century polyphony proper ; (unobtrusive because the effect is always conceived with reference to the combination of lines one with another). Although not actually intended for performance with an instrument, they are in fact more 'modern' in outlook than almost all the lute songs which followed, or than the beautiful songs of Byrd for voice with strings, the great vitality of which depends on the completeness with which the old polyphonic tradition and the new declamatory and instrumental experiments were reconciled. Even in Campion, musically one of the least interesting of the lutenist song writers, one can see how polyphonic rhythm, speech rhythm and strophic dance-song are merged with character-

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istic fluidity; while Dowland in his late work (his first book is closer in method to the French dance-songs published by Tessier) soars far beyond the limitations of strophic instrumental music and beyond the fragmentary chromaticism of a Gesualdo. Significantly as Warlock remarked, his greatest work, *The Pilgrimes Solace*, is both his most polyphonic and also that in which his most advanced harmonic chromaticisms appear. The setting of the words is as passionately sensitive as Monteverdi not only rhythmically and in the 'expressive' progressions it gives rise to, but also in the polyphonically created harmony of the lute part; and beyond this expressiveness the song line is sublimated to an immense arching plasticity (again with trope-like melismatic decorative detail) which is musically completely self-subsistent and which has been rivalled only very seldom in European music (say in Perotin, some troubadour songs, Palestrina, Lasso, Byrd and among later composers Bach and Berlioz). In such stupendous songs as *From silent night* and *In darknesse let me dwell* we have superb examples of music that is local in its foundations and European in comprehensiveness and range. They were written in 1612—within three or four years of Byrd's Five Part Mass, the greatest music of Gibbons and Bull, not to mention the most mature poetry of Donne, Jonson and Shakespeare. In all we see the merging of the local with the European; in all we see that the changing attitudes of the Renaissance, with their ultimate economic implications, seem to have been necessary for the old order to achieve its supremely consummate incarnation. All had divided sympathies; but in general I think the musicians were closer to the old world than the poets. In all the versatility and range of mood and attitude which we can observe in Byrd's work as a whole, we do not find any of the bewilderment, the sense of false appearances and the reversal of values, which was consequent on the onslaught of 'gold' and commerce on the old manorial order; we find nothing analogous to the phenomenon of the Malcontent and Seventeenth Century Melancholy (the initial Poor Law, we remember, is dated 1600), or to the sardonic humour of Jonson, the macabre farce of Tourneur, or the disillusion and disgust which temporarily afflicted Shakespeare. The closest musical approach to Seventeenth Century Melancholy is in some of the most intense ayres and the chromatic lute fancies of Dowland, a few songs of Alfonso Ferrabosco the Younger, John Danyel's astonishing *Chromaticke Tunes*, and the bigger keyboard works of that dark and saturnine genius with the ludicrously inappropriate name of John Bull. The position of Bull in the Jacobean musical scene is peculiarly interesting. Deeply rooted as is his finest music in the old polyphony, his work and personality are pregnant with intimations of the future. Alone among his contemporaries he is first and foremost a keyboard composer rather than a vocal one; and his almost legendary reputation as organist and virginalist itself suggests a kinship with the new, more exhibitionistic attitudes, quite apart from the implications of 'the development of Keyboard Technique.' Again, his fame on the

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continent, both for virtuosity and learning, was even greater than his fame in England (we may compare the continental reputation of the lute virtuoso Dowland), and it was during his travels that he became acquainted with Sweelinck, under whose influence, probably, he indulged in those intrepid enharmonic experiments the full significance of which was not to be revealed until a later age. Even his greatest music—the big *in nomines*, variations and pavans—which is entirely sixteenth century in approach, is imbued, through an unusual prevalence of accented dissonant passing notes, false relations and inflectionally augmented intervals, with a singularly gloomy and enigmatic passion; while the brilliant vitality of the keyboard writing (consider the whirling, cascading fioritura in the bass parts of the galliards) itself tends to render this passion more directly and humanistically dramatic than the more religious (if no less intense) keyboard style of Gibbons. (The beautiful portrait of Bull in the Oxford Music School is completely in keeping—from the long sad face with its piercing fiery eyes to the skull and hour-glass in the background; it is not surprising that John Bull was the kind of person around whom picturesque anecdotes ('it must have been the Devil or John Bull', etc.) accumulate. We remember the parallel if vulgarized case of the nineteenth century virtuosos, Liszt and Paganini). But Bull's music, like that of Dowland and Ferrabosco and Danyel, has always a lyrical ardour and maturity that makes it more comparable with the tragic intensity of Donne than with Ford or Webster. So far as I know Gesualdo is the only musical Melancholic.

VII.

The French chansons, the choral ayres of Whythorne, the conversationally rhythmed airs of the French lutenists such as Guedron and Boesset, and the work of the minor English lutenists song writers were none of them 'dramatic' in the modern sense; even the great songs of Luis Milan and Dowland and Danyel were much more impersonal in their tremendous passion than the declamatory Monteverdi. Their presentation of 'emotion' is less explicit; Byrd's *Tancred and Gismunda* is an isolated approach to the Italian theatricality. But the developing shapes of solo song and dance provided the framework within which the ostensible harmonic expressiveness and declamatory rhetoric of the operatic attitudes were to establish themselves; in order to understand how this establishment took place we might profitably confine our attention to England for a moment and contrast two English composers of the beginning and end of the seventeenth century. These composers are Gibbons and Purcell.

Orlando Gibbons, probably England's greatest composer after Byrd, was born in 1583 and died in 1625. His most significant work was written in the last fifteen years of his life, when Byrd was about seventy, Bull over fifty, and the great church composers of the preceding generation—Tallis, Whyte and Tye—were dead. In temperament and attitude he was essentially a man of the past

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order. At a time when the English madrigal was virtually dead he made some of the finest contributions to the genus in an idiom more austerely and elaborately polyphonic than that of almost any of the masters of the madrigalian age proper, except Byrd, and although he sometimes wrote delicately tender madrigals such as *Dainty Fine Bird*, they have always a peculiar wistfulness and chaste melancholy; even his exceptional contributions to the strophic choral ayre, such as the famous *The Silver Swan*, have this typical mournful nobility and are much more polyphonic in treatment than is usually the case. His most characteristic madrigals—usually on philosophical subjects such as 'What is this Life?'—are indistinguishable in kind from his big church anthems, and show greater independence of part-writing, fewer homophonic passages and a more severely 'vocal' (though very personal) harmonic idiom than we find in any of the Tudor composers except Byrd at his greatest. So complex are the rhythms, so subtly are the lines 'framed to the life of the words', and so habitually elliptical the entries, that the music of the great anthems, services and madrigals might almost be considered the ultimate culmination of the sixteenth century polyphonic outlook: and yet beside these things there are other church works of Gibbons—verse anthems and services—written for solo voices with organ accompaniment in a style, first tentatively investigated by Byrd, which seems to presage the operatic declamation of Pelham Humphrey and Purcell—the shifting of music's centre of social gravity from the church to the stage. Even in the polyphonic church music itself there are sometimes rapid melismatic scale passages, particularly in cadences, which give intimation of the very different effect to which such virtuoso vocal writing will be put in the operatic melody of seventeenth century composers such as the brothers Lawes. Such a verse anthem as *This is the record of John*, for solo voices, chorus and strings is similar in method and in its reconciliation of diverse tendencies to some of the dramatic madrigals of Monteverdi.

Fine as are some of these experimental works, Gibbons' greatest achievements are undoubtedly his polyphonic compositions; and in view of his natural proclivities and of the time at which he worked it is significant both that he should be, with Bull, the greatest and most prolific of English instrumental composers, and also that his mature instrumental work should be consistently polyphonic in outlook. Gibbon's most 'modern' sounding keyboard pieces such as *King's Juell* with its more or less consistent major sevenths and its neat little sequences, are almost all early works; and the most vocal and inflectional in line and rhythm (such as the great four part organ Fantasia or the Fancy in Gamutt flatt) are, as in the case of Dowland, late works which also contain his most profound and poignant harmonic irregularities. The big pavans and galliards too, and a marvel of contrapuntal workmanship such as the *Hunts Up* variations, with their noble 'vocal' lines flowering into a passionate florid keyboard arabesque clearly related to the melismatic passages in the vocal works, are both 'new' in the sense that they are genuinely

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instrumental music and 'old' in the sense that they are the creation of a mind powerfully rooted in the past. This is equally true of the amazingly complex string fantasias, so subtly vocal in their rhythm that even competent professional string players often, nowadays, find them unplayable. And yet with their repeated notes and sequential passages their technique is genuinely that of string music, quite distinct from the idiom of Gibbons' vocal works; and though they are of the past, they are a tradition that Matthew Locke and Purcell and the other Restoration theatre composers were nurtured on. We might even say that there are connections between the impulses behind them, and Bach. Nor do I know where, outside Bach, one can find organ music of a subtlety and concentration comparable with that of Gibbons.

The merging of tendencies which is only latent in Gibbons becomes explicit in Purcell, the third greatest figure (many would say the second) in our musical history. Purcell's early string fantasias, which many consider his finest works, were deliberately written as exercises in the old—in Gibbons'—manner, and are essentially vocal and fugal in the sixteenth-century sense. In their melodically created, intensely poignant augmented intervals and false relations, their contrapuntal ingenuity and rhythmic plasticity, they are an amazingly mature achievement for a man of twenty-two, and a tribute to the vitality of a great tradition. The last of them, the five part fantasia 'on one note' is indeed a kind of swan-song of this tradition, for we see here the sixteenth-century technique of instrumental *in nomine*, which in turn was derived from the mediaeval technique of the vocal polyphonic decoration of the plainsong or folk-tune, carried to its ultimate extreme; the plainsong melody is lengthened out, beyond recognition, until, in the Purcell, it has become one continuous note. At the same time the more *dramatic*—relative to Gibbons—quality of the repeated false relations in, say, the fourth 4-part fantasy can be traced to the continual overlapping of phrases that, compared with Gibbons' long-breathed fluidity, are short and strikingly memorable; and though in general the rhythmic conception is that of the earlier 'religious' attitudes, in the quick sections we can observe a peculiarly lively (and latently theatrical) sense of physical movement which is foreign to the temper and purpose of the string music of Gibbons.

For increasingly through Purcell's career we can see that, despite his roots in the sixteenth-century attitudes and in English folk-song, he was striving to discover the 'new' idiom of the English language which should be adequate to the changed emotional and social conceptions. His problem was, how to achieve a kind of declamation which grew out of the way people spoke and thought at the time, and not out of traditional preconceptions about how to write for voices; and complementarily how to make the simple metrical dances of the concerted spectacle of the masque (which demanded a superficial lilt to which feet could be stamped and stylized groupings arranged) reconcilable with the power of this declamation, and capable of dramatic development. He tackled

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these problems from both sides. In the first place he endeavoured to reconcile his declamatory conception with the theatre dance by making it depend for its dramatic effect on being sung in strict time —he evolved an extremely subtle compromise between speech accent and metrical accent much as Bach was to do later, and created a model for the merging of declaimed English verse into lyrical song which has never been surpassed. (Consider the manner in which the robust lyrical tune at the end of that fine song *The Aspiration* grows out of the vigorously sensitive preceding declamation). This rhythmic dramatic declamation, as opposed to the unmeasured declamation of the Florentines, was a necessary preliminary to the attempt to achieve a union between dramatic declamation with harmonic accompaniment and the formalism of the dance; having established it, Purcell could proceed to tackle his problem from the other end—to develop the latent dramatic possibilities of the dance by exploring the possibilities of diatonicism. He made dramatic declamation more consistent with the dance, and the dance more potentially dramatic.

His first attempt to extend the dance form was by way of a technique much favoured by seventeenth-century composers—that of the ground bass, which provides a link between polyphonic treatment and dance shape (for there is no more obvious way of extending a dance than by perpetual repetition!) No composer, not even Bach, has excelled Purcell at the playing of plastic lyrical lines against the repeated shape figure, so that the metrical and melodic accents continually come in different places, as we may see from, among many examples, that superb (and curiously Bachian) song *Solitude*, with its passionate soaring lines rooted in the language and its dark chromaticisms in harmony, now conceived in the explicitly chordal form of the instrumental continuo. But of course the ground bass technique was essentially lyrical and reflective, not dramatic; and although Purcell never discarded it, as he developed he increasingly turned to diatonicism with its possibilities of groupings of tonal centres, as both a more satisfactory method of extending the dance structure and also as one more easily reconcilable with his operatic declamation. Thus whereas *Dido* is constructed on a basis of the alternation of recitative with metrical dances, the big dramatic climaxes all being marked by the placing of one of the great lyrical-reflective arias on a ground bass, the later *Diocletian* is built on a rudimentary system of key contrast, with some recapitulation of tonal centres in the concluding section. In developing these new methods Purcell turned from his native traditions towards Italy (and later France), where the great school of violin composers had already developed the diatonic sonata-shape while Monteverdi and Carissimi developed the operatic conventions. (The explicitly dramatic opera and the implicitly dramatic sonata were, as we shall see in our next article, mutually influential; for instance Professor Dent has demonstrated how the splitting up of the operatic words for dramatic effect led to the introduction of short rhythmical phrases which became the instrumental 'themes'

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of the sonata.) Purcell complained of the barbarity and provinciality of his local traditions; he sought Italian elegance just as Dryden insisted on the necessity for French polish. Up to a point he was quite right; the methods of the Italian violin school were those of the future and they showed already a mature understanding of what was always to be the fundamental problem of sonata or shape music—how to reconcile the architectural balance of phrases with lyrical drive and fluidity. But I think it is significant that there is now a much more self-conscious insistence on the necessity for a connection between the local and the European than would have been conceivable to Byrd or Dowland. Both Dryden and Purcell owed much of their strength to native traditions; Purcell's roots in folk-song and the Elizabethans are clear in the modal flavour of many of his great strophic tunes and in their habitually irregular rhythms (what variety of phrase grouping there is in Purcell compared with the eighteenth century's 'forming fours' in music, in highly developed military discipline, in Palladian architecture and what else!), and there is always the contact with the language, the typical snapped syncopations and drooping diminished fifths that make Purcell's idiom so personal and immediately recognizable. 'A Song,' he said, 'is the exaltation of Poetry'; but perhaps there is not quite the almost intuitive relation between folk composer and art composer which in the time of Byrd gave evidence as to the manner in which the surviving manorial order preserved an organic contact between all classes of society. Purcell is a theatre composer, and that entails too the idea of a body of people addressed rather than themselves participating. Both Byrd and Purcell were composers for the home, but whereas Byrd wrote for the home and church, Purcell wrote for the home and theatre, for the coffee-house mentality. It is true that Purcell composed some magnificent church music, but Byrd would not have recognized it as such. The difference is not that Purcell's music is more passionate than Byrd's—it isn't—but that the presentation of the emotion is more explicit (and harmonic); more, as we say, theatrical. The way Purcell's art was tending is indicated in dramatically conceived works like the Playford Elegy with their mingling of accompanied declamation and the old ground bass aria with European diatonic sophistication and the architecture of the key system. The neatest instance of the new order is in the late sonatas for two violins with continuo. Here the contrapuntal movements are explicitly instrumental in approach, with brief metrical diatonic 'subjects' which are developed not by fluid lyrical growth but by key grouping, so that they are a compromise between polyphonic and homophonic procedure. On the other hand the slow movements are operatic vocal arias transcribed for violin, to the accompaniment of dramatic chromatic harmonies in the continuo part. Undoubtedly Purcell's compromise produced some of the most beautiful music in the European tradition; yet ultimately it failed as 'the sixteenth century compromise' hadn't failed, and the reasons for its failure—and the failure of the operatic venture of Pelham Humphrey (probably, after Purcell,

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potentially the most talented composer England produced for over two hundred years), Blow and Matthew Locke—were of course fundamentally social and economic.

With the reasons for this failure in England we are not here concerned; but we may point out that the results of the failure are very clearly revealed in such eighteenth-century phenomena as *The Beggars' Opera,* since we can see here the beginning of the patronising attitude to the 'folk' which is evidence of the deep cultural split, and which would have been as inconceivable to Byrd as to the mediaeval composer who used the tunes of the folk (such as the famous *L'Homme Armé* or the *Westron Wynde*) along with the plainsong melodies as the thread round which to crystallize the lines of his polyphony, so that art music and folk music, and monody and polyphony, are both technically and sociologically complementary. In the eighteenth century Dr. Pepusch (who was a man of considerable intelligence, with a genuine love of the English musical tradition) dresses up the 'quaint old' tunes according to Gay's diatonic prescription, as an amusing entertainment for a relatively sophisticated town audience. This is a technique quite distinct from that of the Elizabethan virginalists, to whom folk song was an omnipresent reality of their musical experience so that the local element and the European lived together without shame and on equal terms; in a great work such as Bull's *Walsingham* it is impossible to say which is the more beautiful, the folk tune itself or the art-composer's realization of its polyphonic and figurative possibilities; because the folk tune is not a musical entity which the art-composer takes over and 'treats', it is a part of his living experience which in a sense—in so far as there were then no artificial barriers between folk-composer and art-composer—he helped to create. The Tudor composer did not think of music as 'entertainment' in the same way as did the composer of the later eighteenth century. At least in so far as music was entertainment for them (and much of the best of it was in the first place homage to God) it was active rather than passive entertainment, music to perform rather than to listen to. It is interesting to compare Byrd's famous remark quoted at the head of this essay (there are similar statements from Vittoria, Palestrina and Bach) with the account of the function of music offered by Dr. Burney in the eighteenth century: 'An innocent Luxury, unnecessary indeed to our Existence, but a great improvement and gratification of the sense of Hearing.'

VIII.

But of course England was exceptional in the rapidity with which the vitality of her Renaissance humanism turned sour and was stifled in the allied phenomena of Puritanism, commercialism and industrialism, so that the native idiom, dominated by foreign models, did not re-emerge until the twentieth century. Mammoth performances of the *Messiah,* interspersed with Songs by Mrs. Arne and Comic Interludes by Mr. Arne, sanctioned once and for all the divorce between Art and Entertainment, and popular Sentiment (the

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roast beef of old England) became increasingly factitious, identified with the interests of the ruling classes. (The eulogy of the Chosen Race, sung in the *Messiah* with an admirable manly gusto, has become, in *Elijah*, a double-faced snivel). On the continent the black-out process was delayed for a hundred more 'glorious' years; if Purcell, for all his genius, proved culturally abortive, composers in Italy, Germany and France were to achieve the consummate expression of the civilization of the modern world (previous to the machine age) which we in England by-passed. Curiously enough one of the first works completely to express the new humanistic outlook was written deliberately in the old technique. As early as 1594 that amazing comic genius Orazio Vecchi wrote a work called *Amfiparnasso, comedia harmonica*, which although designed as a series of polyphonic madrigals, is virtually a 'concert' opera without action, not merely in the fact that it tells a dramatic story with elaborate characterization but in the whole temper of its conception. The polyphony is of singular flexibility and the resultant harmony peculiarly audacious, as one would expect in a latently dramatic work. Whereas the chromatic madrigals of Gesualdo have a somewhat tentative and experimental quality, in the *Amfiparnasso*, the old vocal polyphony, the tradition of the commedia del Arte, harmonic chromaticism and dance measure mingle with a brilliance that rivals Monteverdi himself. This work, the immediate product of a period in European history which has many points in common with our own, should be given a contemporary performance. Its glittering wit and sophistication should be congenial to modern audiences while its lyrical fervour should induce a salutary humility. It is remarkable for its emotional range—from tragic pathos to ribald high spirits; and although written in what is basically the old technique it becomes, through abrupt changes of tonality and extraordinary complexities of rhythm, the first great and mature incarnation of Italian humanism.

In Monteverdi's operas and madrigals we come to the supreme achievement of seventeenth century baroque culture. It is not, as the history books used to suggest, for his declamation in itself that Monteverdi is important; there was nothing new in the idea of musical declamation which was indeed fairly common in mediaeval secular music. What is important is the central position occupied by Monteverdi's declamation, the way in which it combines with the elements of choral polyphony, instrumental ritornelli and dance structure; Monteverdi's significance rests in his prodigious assimilative powers—powers such as belong only to the very highest genius. I do not know any music more profoundly moving than Monteverdi's *Lamento da Ninfa*, and we see here a truly remarkable concatenation of tendencies. There is a direct dramatic ardour of phrase almost comparable with that of Gesualdo; but there is also a lyrical detachment, a freedom from the narrowly subjective, which is a legacy from the methods of the old polyphonists; there is a new sensuous delight in the possibilities of instrumental colour; and there is also the poise and tragic intensity which, in moments of

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the highest inspiration, may be conveyed through the rigidity of dance formalism (*cf.* Couperin's use of the rondeau). We can see in Monteverdi's example how all these 'tendencies' which we have referred to individually, could never have achieved their full significance until a supreme genius revealed their inter-relations; to appreciate the maturing of Monteverdi's assimilative powers we have only to compare the beautiful but tentative passion of *Orfeo* with the masterly stylized synthesis of all the elements involved in a highly developed theatre music, which makes the *Incoronazione da Poppaea* not only the prototype, but also the ideal, for baroque opera during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Nothing could be more absurd than the one-time text-book commonplace that increasing familiarity with instruments 'produced' chromaticism and the shift from the voice to the dance. It would be truer to put the matter the other way round. The ideals of baroque civilization, consummated in the passionately human music of Monteverdi, produced the changed musical conceptions, and they led to the increasing exploitation of instrumental resource. Of course when once the instruments were in general use, they speeded up the process of the evolution of the new idioms; but they were not in any sense their cause.

Though supreme, Monteverdi is by no means isolated. Analogous tendencies are perceptible in the fervently dramatic cantatas of Luigi Rossi and in the balance between declamatory accent and architectural proportion in the cantatas of Carissimi, whose work is a model of the pure Roman style in dramatic music as Palestrian had been the model of pure Roman church polyphony. In Monteverdi, Rossi and Carissimi we can observe the pallid unrhythmical recitative of the Florentines swelling into a rich lyrical *arioso*—Monteverdi's (recorded) *Ballo delle ingrate* is an instance as illuminating as it is beautiful. In all the music, secular and ecclesiastical, the contours become fuller, the proportions more stylized, the figuration more voluptuous, the harmonies more boldly (chromatically) coloured, the instrumentation more sonorous and varied. Both Monteverdi's operas and Carissimi's oratorios (which were in essence theatrical) call for very considerable instrumental resources, used not in the deliberately blurred homophonic fashion of the nineteenth century, but with great clarity and lucidity and a sharp opposition between brass and strings. We can note the same quality in the works of the Venetian Giovanni Gabrieli, both in his colourful almost theatrical and orchestral handling of choral masses in his motets for double choir and in his magnificent grandiose frescoes for wind instruments and strings. (It is illuminating to contrast the austere noble polyphony of the Sonatas *Pian e forte* of 1597—which for all their colour contrasts are vocal and modal in conception and are written for brass and *viols*—with the brilliant florid instrumental virtuosity of the canzoni of 1615—which are written in more diatonic baroque figuration for brass and *violins*). Thus in music without any ostensible dramatic purpose the humanistic impulses manifest themselves. Keyboard music evolves from

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the fluid mystical intensity of Cabezon and Gibbons to the latently diatonic fugue and improvisatory toccata of Frescobaldi and Sweelinck, with their anguished chromaticisms, more architectural balance of key centres, and opulent figurative arabesque: string music evolves from the polyphonic fantasia to the texture-shape compromise of the two-violin sonatas of Corelli and Rosenmuller, with their elaborately ornamented two-part lyrical polyphony soaring over the stable dance-structure and the diatonic harmonic foundation of continuo part (related to the homophonic basis to operatic declamation). Even choral church music itself became in the work of Lotti inherently rhetorical, its overlapping fugal entries conditioned by its diatonic harmonic proportions, its supple part writing moving freely within the harmonically conceived mould of its chromaticisms, rather than the chromaticisms being the 'inevitable' result of melodic precedure. In all these things,—in the melodic and harmonic sumptuousness of Lotti's terrific eight part *Crucifixus*, in Frescobaldi's organ music, Rosenmuller's violin sonatas, Gabrieli's instrumental music, Carissimi's and Rossi's cantatas and Monteverdi's operas—we see the humanistic expressive passion, the rounded lyrical curves, the florid figuration, the brilliantly 'coloured' harmonies which are paralleled in baroque architecture and painting. Only very seldom did even the nineteenth century orchestra achieve anything approaching the sensuous radiance and glitter of baroque instrumentation. Listening recently to Berlioz's *Te Deum* and the *Funeral March for the last scene of Hamlet* it occurred to me that Berlioz's famous orchestration is much closer to Giovanni Gabrieli and the seventeenth century in effect than to anything in the nineteenth or even eighteenth centuries. Here too the orchestration is not merely a filling in of harmonic chordal blocks; it is melodic orchestration, depending not on the blurring of tone colours but on their sharp opposition. But then Berlioz is altogether an unnineteenth-century-ish figure, with his melodically based art and his aristocratic finesse. His romanticism has more in common with baroque rhetoric than with the subjectivism of the nineteenth century. In the seventeenth century baroque even chamber music acquired an orchestral sensuousness. Those who know seventeenth century violin sonatas only in the usual medium with piano continuo should listen to the wonderful record of the Rosenmuller E minor sonata with continuo played, as originally intended, on harpsichord organ and string bass; quite apart from the baroque splendour of the music, the noise of the instrumental combination is entrancingly lovely.

Seventeenth century baroque music came to fruition in Italy; but Heinrich Schutz, who studied in Italy under both Monteverdi and Gabrieli, carried the technique to Germany and brought the Lutheran Reformation to a belated musical consummation in his reconciliation of polyphonic and modal plasticity with passionate humanistic declamation and sonorous and harmonic vitality. In France, Lully evolved a new declamation of the French language through the deliberate study of the voice inflections of La Champmeslé, the

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great interpretor of Racine; and at the same time made this declamation consistent with a shape structure apposite to one of the most highly stylized social orders in European history. The formal Lullian overture, with the majestic clarity of the periods and the richness of the diatonic harmony in its slow introduction and rhythmic verve of its contrapuntal section, looks back to the noble Carissimi, as Schutz's Passions do to Monteverdi. Though more explicitly social and less religious than Schutz, the music of Lully is the reverse of 'frigid' if sympathetically performed; and it is closer to the slowly evolving social hierarchy of the eighteenth century. Indeed Lully's opera-ballet, providing for a direct social (as opposed to ritualistic) alliance of voice and dance, was the most extreme form of a tendency which in varying degrees dominated baroque music from Monteverdi's *Poppea* to the work of Piccini and even the ostensibly realistic and unbaroque Gluck. The seventeenth-century stylization, less 'natural' than the stylization of the sixteenth, is nonetheless part of a continuous tradition which links up with the great figures representing the transition into eighteenth-century civilization—with Alessandro Scarlatti and Handel, with Couperin and Rameau and Gluck, with Buxtehude and J. S. Bach. We shall be dealing with these more fully in our next article when we consider the significance of the device of the continuo and the bases of diatonic thought. Here we may refer to the main theme of this next essay—the comprehensiveness of the genius of Bach who summarizes in his work the story of European musical evolution as we have so far traced it, the mediaeval Christian polyphonic outlook, the baroque humanistic rhetoric, and the emerging social and dramatic concept of the eighteenth century. This colossus stands firm in the centre of European musical history, embracing worlds past and worlds to come. No one man can contribute more, musically speaking, to an understanding of the evolution of European civilization.

IX.

Perhaps the most convenient single word to describe the idiom of seventeenth-century baroque is Rhetoric, providing one can rid the word of any pejorative implications. Although the lines became influenced by diatonic instrumental thought, the proportions influenced by key balance and the harmony homophonically and expressively conceived, you do not get, in the seventeenth century, the fully fledged dramatic conception of the eighteenth century sonata because, as we shall see, this is not conceivable—in Haydn's, Mozart's or Beethoven's sense—without the possibility of unrestricted modulation which arrived with more developed systems of temperament. This does not mean that seventeenth century baroque music suffers through its inadequacy in the clear definition of key contrasts (when we protest against such a suggestion reverence to the memory of Parry should not blind us to the incalculable harm done by his contribution on the seventeenth century to the Oxford History.) If only the more obvious diatonic

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modulations were available as a structural tonal basis to a composition, seventeenth century composers used incidental colourings of tonality and other melodically derived freedoms arising from their direct contact with sixteenth century methods, which the sonata technique had to dispense with. (The test case is, of course, the avowedly experimental Hexachord fancies of Bull; but although these cover the whole range of chromatic modulation with the obliteration of the acoustical 'coma' and the identification of F sharp and G flat, sometimes in the same bar, they are essentially fugal and melodic in technique and do not attempt to exploit the architectural and dramatic implications of diatonic and chromatic tonality). As Tovey said, 'the importance of a change of key depends, not on its remoteness, but on whether it is a colour effect in the course of a melody or a dramatic action which has caused the home tonic to disappear below the horizon. Composers long before Beethoven were often fond of experimenting with brilliant changes of key. Such experiments may almost be reckoned among the means by which the founders of classical tonality established the normal solidity of their harmony; but between such colour effects and the most ordinary sonata-like establishment of the orthodox dominant, or the relative major, there is as much difference as there is between looking at pictures of foreign places in an album and travelling, bag and baggage, to spend the night in another house.' From this point of view the rhetoric of baroque opera from Monteverdi to Alessandro Scarlatti and Handel occupies a half-way house between vocal polyphony and the instrumental design of the dramatic sonata. While one doesn't want to countenance the apallingly wrong-headed (and still fairly widespread) notion that sixteenth-century music ought to be performed in an attenuated, remote and 'refined' fashion, and rather slowly (it was certainly performed with the utmost passion), there is some justification for considering sixteenth-century methods 'intimate'—a welling up of lyrical life both as complex, and as natural, as breathing. Comparatively, seventeenth-century baroque music, in particular the operatic, is the conscious (rhetorical) presentation of emotion, in which the stylization assures its social validity (hence perhaps the significance of the mating of dance formalism with the obviously expressive elements). Comparatively again, in the eighteenth century sonata the 'drama' is inherent in the nature of the organism, and although it starts as a social medium, in the hands of the masters it becomes, as the social hierarchy crumbles, increasingly personal until in Beethoven you get the most aggressively individual human personality incarnating the drama of its struggle with and against society in the most violent dispositions and oppositions of key centres and thematic motives. The transition is from vocal polyphony as a comunal activity, to the rhetorical presentation of emotion by solo voices linked with instrumental technique through the social framework of the dance, to the complete projection of the struggles of the human personality into 'absolute' self-contained instrumental form. These phases correspond to the dominating phases in the evolution of our

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civilization ; for convenience, we may refer to them as lyrical, rhetorical and dramatic.

W. H. MELLERS.

APPENDIX.

The above is an attempt to define an attitude to musical evolution in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, not an attempt at a comprehensive musical history of the period. Readers with sufficient training in musical technicalities are asked to consider it in conjunction with the classic text-books—R. O. Morris's *Contrapuntal Technique in the Sixteenth Century* and Knud Jeppeson's *Palestrina's Use of the Dissonance.* The best technical account of the phenomenon of chromaticism is Philip Heseltine's chapter from his and Cecil Gray's book on Gesualdo. Less specifically technical works which the reader is referred to are Prunières's book on Monteverdi (Dent), Westrup's on Purcell (Master Musicians Series), and Fellowes' writings on the English School (O.U.P.) The best history of music I know is Prunière's *Nouvelle Histoire* which has just been issued by Dent in translation. This is particularly valuable because it devotes adequate space to mediaeval music, and stops with the eighteenth century. It is perhaps not free from bias : but I'm inclined to think that for English people to read musical history with a *French* bias might be salutary in so far as it helps to counterbalance years of Teutonic training.

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COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

RISE IN PRICE AND REFUSAL OF SUBSCRIPTIONS.

We owe apologies for having given no earlier or more formal notice of the raised price of *Scrutiny* than is to be found at the bottom of the inside back cover of the last issue—the issue with which the new price began. Circumstances precipitated the decision, which had to be enforced at once. Naturally, we very much deplore too the necessity of refusing new subscriptions (*not* renewals of old subscriptions): the printing cannot at present be increased.

EDITORIAL PROBLEMS.

In ways, not all of which will be immediately divined by the reader, the exigencies and accidents of war-conditions defeat editorial planning and impose hand-to-mouth solutions. An article has to go in now, and not later, as intended, and the balance of the number is upset: the planned distribution of attention is undone, and perhaps (as in this number) the pages allotted to reviewing encroached on. We can only hope to maintain a fair balance over the year. And projects involving long-term planning and sustained co-operation are impossible.

CO-PROSPERITY?

THE CASE FOR EXAMINATIONS, by J. L. Brereton (*C.U.P.*, 8/6).

'Examinations . . . one of the most potent instruments of progress in human society'. 'No competent observer will deny that examinations are now woven into the fabric of English education and play an intimate part in holding it together'. (pp. 48 and vi).

The first thing to ask a specialist on his specialism is how his activity fits in with the major aims of society—in fact what is his idea of the good life. 'Progress'—with a flavour almost archaic in midsummer 1944—is a fair summary of what Mr. Brereton takes to be our guide. He is not explicit about what he understands by progress, but by inference it will lead to a tidy planner's world. A

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world in which everyone proceeds, as smoothly as a can of beans on a factory belt, to a job for which he/she is found suitable, on examination, by 'those responsible for the future activities of successful students'. The schools are to play their part by working to efficiently co-ordinated and standardized syllabuses. Or perhaps syllabus, because Mr. Brereton would not object (if he does not actually recommend) to a national centrally dispensed syllabus, drawn up by 'the teachers and those responsible for the pupils' future activities'. 'We suffer', he complains, 'from the absence of machinery for the co-ordinating and planning of syllabuses'. Despite Mr. Brereton's deference to the principle of democracy, it all sounds rather like what I have heard described as 'government of the people, for the people, by Me'.

It is unkind to expect 'the day-to-day administrator' to make the references that would inspire confidence in a sympathetic reader, and much, we are told, has been omitted—but only about the theory and technique of examinations. It is not shortage of space that prevents him from setting his machine in an acceptable educational context. But it is reasonable to expect in such a book at least a few signposts pointing to the author's conception of education, and they do exist. Mr. Brereton deplores the existence of a 'school of young romantics in the universities who are unwilling to admit that education is concerned with training people to do, know and understand certain things'. Elsewhere, education is 'the machinery for training children and adults to use their minds and bodies in new ways'; and the 'educated man, one whose mental and physical characteristics have been formed as the result of repeated activity directed towards an end'. The child is educated by learning 'subjects', and then the teacher or examiner uses examinations to 'measure the student's progress or capacity, much as a farmer weighs or tests his pigs or his chickens'. But what respectively are 'the certain things' 'the new ways' and the 'end' referred to is a question to which the enquirer, puffing in the educational rearguard, finds no convincing answer.

Teacher and pupil are left in no uncertainty about the benefits to be had from living in the occupied territory. Teachers are to be stimulated: 'An external examination . . . stimulates the teachers, because it places them in competition with one another'. 'The pupils themselves can compare the teachers, by comparing their own degree of success with that of pupils in other classes'. If however a teacher feels that this atmosphere of competition and inspection is just too exhilarating, and seeks to change his school, he will not find things so easy, the slacker:

> When teachers apply for their *first* appointment in a school, they compete with one another on the basis of their academic qualifications, and the record they bring with them from their training. On the other hand, *experienced* teachers applying for a post, are judged also on their record as teachers, and one of the few methods available for measuring success in teaching is a

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> knowledge of the number of students strained by the teacher who have passed the examinations for which they were preparing.

(Should this quotation meet the eye of a potential teacher, he need not despair—it's not as bad as all that really; the present reviewer cannot remember ever having stated or having been asked about examination successes in a number of interviews and applications). Teachers again who forget that their job is to 'supplement the text-book' will soon realize that no highbrow ideas about education will be tolerated for a moment; 'although nominally bound by the syllabus, teachers are sometimes tempted to stray unnecessarily from it by their natural desire to stimulate interest. But the necessity to get their students through the examination acts as a valuable restraint on them, which may be most important to the serious student'. And should a teacher become a headmaster, his revolutionary ardour will be properly suppressed: 'no headmaster of a maintained school under-estimates the power of publicity and pressure exerted through members of the Education Committee'. Considering the extent to which examinations are clamped down on education, one must forgive Mr. Brereton the satisfaction he evidently feels at being able to put enterprise and liveliness severely in their place. The McNair Report suggested that teachers should be paid salaries on a level with those paid to comparable civil servants; and if Mr. Brereton's plans are accepted teachers will face a vista as full of excitement and variety as that which faces the civil servant, who knows at the beginning of his career that twenty or thirty years hence he will be arriving at the same office at the same time with the same trivial tasks to be got through.

By now the reader will be able to judge how nourishing will be the fare dealt out to pupils in the new protectorate. 'An external examination stimulates the students . . . This stimulating action depends on the existence of a suitable reward for successful students'. 'The School Certificate is both a stimulus to school children and their teachers, and a means of deciding which pupils are fit to proceed to various kinds of employment'. 'The boys and girls who reach a certain mental standard are set aside for some purpose, just as the best fowls or pigs may be set aside for breeding'.

The Case for Examinations falls to the ground because the author's conception of education is sterile. He argues—what no one will deny—that examinations can test knowledge and some skills. He fails to convince that the mechanism he loves examines anything worth examining, or serves any valuable purpose. If the aim of education is to enable pupils to have life and have it more abundantly, examinations as envisaged by Mr. Brereton are totally irrelevant. They can test only a small part of the individual's growth, and that not the most important part. Examinations as Mr. Brereton would have them have already disproportionately stressed this small part, so that the activities of secondary schools[1] are lopsided; the pupils' growth is distorted. The reader who is prepared to modify his views

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and to meet Mr. Brereton soon finds that his 'case' remains a matter of assertion, and that it is impossible to find any common ground. Just at the points where discussion would be appropriate the reader is fobbed off with 'I believe . . .' 'I think . . .' or with some incredible generalization opening with a question-begging formula 'the majority admit . . .' 'all good teachers wish . . .' 'No competent observer will deny . . .' One might have expected Mr. Brereton to rebut the common objections to the examination system, but his awareness of these objections takes the form not of inspection and criticism but only of occasional somewhat irritated allusions. He notes for instance that Sir Richard Livingstone (in *Education for a World Adrift*) denounces examinations, but so far from refuting his argument Mr. Brereton merely picks on what he considers to be an unfounded generalization of Sir Richard's about education, and counters it with an astounding generalization and a whole page out of Dewey. And yet Sir Richard—if Mr. Brereton will forgive my quoting the reactionary exponent of a barren doctrine— clearly and briefly stated part of the usual case against examinations. They are bad for pupils—for the slow and the stupid, and for the nervous; even the keenest feel relief when the strain is over. They are bad for teachers; exams. divert them from education to cramming. They lead to the aiming at mechanical results and the neglect of moral and spiritual factors. They put the emphasis on competition, on the getting of places in the world on examination results, and thus pervert education into a savage competitive scramble. Of them all, the School Certificate is the worst because it distorts secondary education almost from the start.

It is to be hoped that this book will circulate widely; it is a portent and a warning. Unconsciously it exhibits at work in the educational field the vitiating effects of the doctrine of progress in its 1944 dress—the belief that all we have to do is to get the machinery right. Organizers, administrators and specialists of many kinds are prone to it; and we do not need the blurb's reminder that Mr. Brereton 'has worked for sixteen years at the organization-end of the Cambridge Local Examinations' to realize that he is an administrator, pure and very simple, uncontaminated by any doubt that machinery, because it works, is good. The mere administrator is something of a menace; in his hands the machine becomes all-important, the human factor is neglected. What we need—for instance in the field of education—are not administrators primarily but educated people with a capacity for administration. (And in the local administration of education we sometimes get them).

Mr. Brereton then has the characteristic administrators' inability to see the whole for the part with which he is intimately concerned. Unhampered by too exacting a definition of education, fascinated by the vision of thousands of heads bent over the nation-

[1]But not of senior schools. The McNair Report and other observers have noted that some senior schools, free from examinations, are livelier and more educational than secondary schools.

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wide set-book, mesmerised by the steady stream of scripts moving in to the centre to be allocated to the appropriate markers, he unfolds his blue-prints: 'Machinery must be devised . . . national agreement on syllabuses . . . the task of supplying trained teachers and suitable textbooks increases with the number of unnecessarily different syllabuses' (the McNair Committee in two years of investigating the supply of teachers never thought of that one), and 'the examination system would lose all its co-ordinating power . . .' The bureaucrat's love for a tidy paper plan leads him to put faith (somewhat comic to anyone slightly experienced in schools) in paper qualifications and statistical measurement. It leads him also to throw away a tactical strongpoint where he might have built up a position, when he records his belief that Open Scholarship Examinations to the universities have exercised a bad influence on education. The typical bureaucrat's non-sense of proportion has already been noted, but it is impossible not to quote a couple of bulls: 'History has shown the same tendency to transform the Higher School Certificate . . .' and (speaking of a syllabus) 'the complex processes of historical development will evolve . . . .' One is reminded of the film advertisement which said 'History was made when two tons of hairgrease were used for the crowds in———'. Again the administrator's passion for detailed regulation causes him to deplore the Board's failure to determine the curriculum—forgetting that the Board's regulations for schools do lay down the general content of the curriculum.

On many pages Mr. Brereton insists that the co-operation of teachers is necessary for co-prosperity, but it does not appear that he has a very high opinion of teacher or pupil. His conception of the teacher as one who needs to be kept up to the mark is inept; and I have yet to come across the eccentrics who (Mr. Brereton suggests) would dissipate the time of their pupils if they were not wisely curbed by the omnipotent syllabus. It might be hazarded that the form of laziness to which teachers are most liable is the mental sloth which equates examinations with education and causes the teacher to accept his chains with complacency. His notion of the child as a creature in constant need of stimulation by competition is equally poverty-stricken. Children like work; they like being kept in reasonable order. Mr. Brereton is a bit behind the times. His idea of the relationship between staff and children is correspondingly antiquated, if it is fair to say that he contemplates with equanimity a school in which pupils make a habit of comparing the examination results of various teachers. Nor am I entirely happy about the pattern of relationship that appears on p. 121—where too there is a beautiful specimen of argument by false analogy.

To the present reviewer the book does not seem even to make the best case for examinations, because the mass-examination with preparation by mass-production bulks so large. A wider view and one that would have made possible a measure of assent would have included the non-academic residential tests that are one way (I understand) of entering the Army and the school at Dartington

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Hall. The book lacks contact with reality, full as it is with empirical facts; this is the impression it makes on readers who feel frustration at the irrelevance—with calamity round the corner—of so much that goes on in secondary schools. Such readers must be excused impatience in reading a work which is apparently satisfied with the schools' present function of turning out technicians, because it is from the lack, not of technicians, but of educated people that we have suffered.

DENYS THOMPSON.

THE LIBERAL CASE

THE ROAD TO SERFDOM, by F. A. Hayek (*Routledge,* 10/6).

'The following pages are the product of an experience as near as possible to twice living through the same period—or at least twice watching a very similar evolution of ideas. While this is an experience one is not likely to gain in one country, it may in certain circumstances be acquired by living in turn for long periods in different countries . . . When one hears for the second time opinions expressed or measures advocated which one has first met twenty or twenty-five years ago, they assume a new meaning as symptoms of a definite trend'.

These sentences from the first page of Professor Hayek's book indicate part of what gives it its special value. From this point of view it can be classed with a number of other valuable political works which we have had of recent years from writers of Continental origin. It will be enough to mention Drucker's *End of Economic Man,* Borkenau's *Totalitarian Enemy* and Ferrero's *Pouvoir* (published in New York). Though they differ a good deal in viewpoint and emphasis, they have in common a quality that comes from having known totalitarianism at first hand, as something threatening and overwhelming their own country, and this, when combined with the intellectual distinction all these authors possess, makes them particularly worth reading at present.

Of all the books I have mentioned, Professor Hayek's is perhaps the least detailed and specific in its treatment of particular social situations. It is also the most uncompromising in its opposition to totalitarian tendencies, and the most closely argued and single-minded. It covers a remarkable amount of ground by rigid exclusion of the inessential, and even if one sometimes thinks that some of what is not so inessential has also been omitted, there is plenty to reflect on.

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What chiefly distinguishes *The Road to Serfdom* from the host of anti-totalitarian works that have appeared is its vigorous insistence that political totalitarianism is not merely something that has, for unfortunate historical reasons, accompanied attempts at economic collectivism, but is an inevitable result of such attempts. Since Professor Hayek is a professional economist, it is as well to say here that his argument is not in the main a technically economic one, but is conducted on the political plane, except for such things as the denial that the growth of monopoly is inevitable on technological grounds; and even there, I fancy, the prudent opponent would take his stand on an assessment of historical trends that did not lay too great a stress on purely economic factors.

The book is, in fact, as the author says 'a political book', though I hope that he does 'the socialists of all parties' to whom he dedicates it less than justice when he fears it will offend them. I should think any socialist who was not completely bigoted would welcome such a forceful and challenging presentation of the liberal case. But it is not as an opponent that I want to discuss the book, for in fact I find its contentions very persuasive. Nor can I venture to summarize the whole closely woven argument. All I can do is to comment on a few outstanding points.

Perhaps the gist of Professor Hayek's diagnosis of the popularity of collectivist ideas lies in the sentences: 'There is little question that almost every one of the technical ideals of our experts could be realized within a comparatively short time if to achieve them were made the sole aim of humanity . . . It is the frustration of his ambitions in his own field which makes the specialist revolt against the existing order'. This, and the argument that follows, brings out very clearly the connection between the rise of collectivist ideals and the growing preponderance of the 'ways and means' mind, as Sir Halford Mackinder calls it in *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, of which Pelican Books has given us such a timely reprint. Professor Hayek points out that this type of mind, valuable though it is *in a free society*, would be precisely the most dangerous and intolerant if it got the chance of planning society as a whole. And the attitude is not one confined to a few obvious fanatics: 'in our predilections and interests we are all in some measure specialists'.

If it were necessary to find a single word for the social ideal that underlies Professor Hayek's argument, I should be inclined to take as more fundamental than 'liberal' or 'individualist', the term 'pluralist'. This has the advantage over 'individualist' that it does more justice to the importance for a free society of voluntary associations for various common ends. It is generally recognized that the strength of these has been one of the factors making for the success of free institutions in this country, and the scantiness of reference to them puts Professor Hayek's picture a little out of focus. It is with this qualification in mind that it is possible to accept such a contention as that phrases like 'common good' 'have no sufficiently definite meaning to determine a particular course of action'. This, in its context, is a valid rejection of a monistic view of society, but

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may suggest to some an unduly rigid individualism.

In so far as the notion of a single social end is rejected, it is surely clear that (leaving aside technicalities and questions of what is practicable here and now) the *kind* of co-ordinating mechanism wanted for the varying ends of individuals is an impersonal one such as the price system—or, as its enemies call it, 'production for profit', opposing it to 'production for use', as if it could ever be profitable to make what was not of use. The 'production for use' catchword is not one which Professor Hayek discusses as such, but it obviously falls within the scope of his argument. For those who use it normally mean 'production according to some pre-arranged plan'. The antithesis is between production for profit and production because of the decision of some authority. This side of the argument is conveniently summed up by Professor Hayek in his condemnation of an incomplete rationalism which 'fails to see that, unless this complex society is to be destroyed, the only alternative to submission to the impersonal and seemingly irrational forces of the market is submission to an equally incontrollable and therefore arbitrary power of other men'.

Among many other excellent things, I shall pick out only one: the admirable analysis of the contention often made by idealistic collectivists that there can be all-over planning which, by confining itself to economic activities, increases our liberty by setting us free for the pursuit of higher values. In fact, as Professor Hayek makes clear, 'there are no purely economic ends separate from the other ends of life'. The so-called 'economic motive' is 'merely the desire for general opportunity, the desire for power to achieve unspecified ends'. (It might, of course, be contended that societies may differ in the importance they attach even to this 'general opportunity', and that it would be well if a more radical detachment could be cultivated, but Professor Hayek's argument holds good within the general framework of our civilization). The reason why in a free economy we are in a position to lay relatively little stress on a 'merely' economic loss is that such a loss is 'one whose effect we can make fall on our less important needs'. On the other hand, 'central planning means that the economic problem is to be solved by the community instead of by the individual; but this involves that it must also be the community, or rather its representatives, who must decide the relative importance of the different needs'.

It is natural that there should be more room for disagreement the closer one comes to practical details, and as this is also where I feel least competent to assess the force of the contentions, I shall say little about them. But Professor Hayek has made his main points so firmly that any who join issue with him will have to make it clear whether they are attacking his principles or his arguments about means, and that should help to separate the sheep from the goats—if one may decently describe so the 'socialists of all parties'.

Apart from the controversial question of the inevitability of monopoly, there are a few others on which a tentative query may be in place. Professor Hayek rightly insists on the difficulty of

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achieving adequate agreement on any inclusive plan, but perhaps his thinking on this topic is a little too rigid. It is so difficult to know just how the tide of opinion is turning. Though it is true that 'agreement on the desirability of planning is not supported by agreement on the end the plan is to serve', yet even on the latter it looks as if people's faces were set towards some agreement in principle. Would there have been twenty-five years ago the general agreement, which Professor Hayek shares, on the principle of a basic minimum standard, to be provided 'outside of and supplementary to the market system'? And may it not be that the idea of social priorities which seems to be spreading in a rough-and-ready, undogmatic, and sometimes (I dare say) rather loose-minded fashion, will take shape in a greater measure of agreement on the use of our resources than he reckons on? But I think the framework of his argument allows room for such a development, though not to the point where 'the communal sector, in which the state controls all the means, exceeds a certain proportion of the whole'.

Another, more ominous, question is where the driving power for making competition effective is to come from. But this is no place to discuss the political strategy of the citizen as consumer against an alliance of monopolist and organized labour. This, and many other queries must be left to the reader. I must leave the matter here, affirming my belief that no more valuable work on politics has been published in this country for years.

J. C. MAXWELL.

'ATTITUDE FOR THE MODERN POET'

THE PERSONAL PRINCIPLE—Studies in Modern Poetry, by D. S. Savage (*Routledge,* 10/6).

This book raises, in some form or other, almost all the issues relevant to contemporary writing, and some which are not quite. A glance through the index, remembering that there are only 192 small pages before it, is a disturbing experience: Addison, aestheticism, Aldington, 'Americanism', Aristophanes, . . . Berdyaev, 'biologism', Blake, Boethius, Böhme, 'bourgeois', Brancusi, . . . Caine, Hall., Calvin, capitalism, Catholicism, Chaucer, Chekhov, Chesterton, Christ, Christianity, Church, the., class, classic, -al, -ism, 'clerisy', Coleridge, Collins, William., communism, com-

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munity, 'copies' (and originals), Corelli, Marie., . . . and so on to Zeitgeist. The mind shrinks a little before so many voices demanding a hearing in a space so confined. Fortunately, Mr. Savage exercises an intelligent control over the ideas which he has assembled, and from time to time a point is made very ably and, what is unusual in slim books on modern poetry, with an experienced awareness of other intellectual positions which might possibly be considered tenable. This makes for capable criticism, though one sometimes wishes, perhaps rather perversely, for a criticism just a little less guarded, a little more given to the occasional overstatement or peculiarly personal reaction which generates enthusiasm or stimulates disagreement. Mr. Savage's 'system', which has a great deal to recommend it, has certain disadvantages which are so uncommon in contemporary criticism that it seems almost ungrateful to mention them. To begin with, the system is very comprehensive, and in order to express himself completely Mr. Savage is compelled to go over a great deal of ground which is already very familiar. Secondly, it is supported only by Mr. Savage's own interpretation of modern social history, an interpretation which, admittedly, can be widely received with approval, but which never-the-less cannot assume in the reader that agreement upon fundamental questions of value which would enable him to proceed with his criticism without having to return constantly to vast problems which are at root religious or philosophical. An intelligent critic will realize, as Mr. Savage has realized, that the more thought one gives to the nature of good and bad writing, the more far-reaching and involved the question becomes, until it seems that one cannot say why, or how, one commends this poem, and dismisses that, without turning one's whole mind, background and influences inside out in support of the fundamental 'I believe'.

It seems to me that the really successful critic is either within a homogeneous, poised and cultured society, like Johnson, and shares its limitations, or must, like Eliot, assume a public which at least understands what he means by the abstract terms which he uses. Otherwise, he is compelled constantly to impede the flow of his thought by explanations and definitions which it would be better for him to reserve for himself, putting before the reader only the idea which he finally forms without setting down the interior monologue which precedes it. Mr. Savage is, I think, a little too full in places, without always succeeding in making his point any more clearly or forcibly. He is sometimes in danger of appearing to play with words, as one tends to be when one comes to attempt to enlarge upon what one means by a general statement, in abstract terms. Either the reader attaches a different meaning to the terms used from that which the critic intends, or he is unsure of what the critic means, or he doesn't see why the critic should say at such great length something with which he agrees from the first. In the following passage, for example, a simple and familiar idea is not made more explicit in any way that I can see by the number of words used in the telling of it:

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> They ('classics') survive, not by virtue of the coat and breeches, but by virtue of the organic human body within them. Not by what is peculiar to their transitory time, but by what, although completely rooted in that time and growing out of it, is universal. But what is this quality which is 'universal'? I suggest that it is nothing else than the completely personal, the original, as opposed to the conventional, the second-hand. It is work that is filled with a personal, original, creative quality, which survives and finds a response in other times than its own. It is those elements which are conventional, in other words social rather than personal, which serve to obfuscate the texture of the work in which they appear . . .

This criticism, instead of focussing the reader's mind upon a precise statement, with which he may agree or not as he chooses, seems to me to suggest a number of issues in such general terms that agreement or disagreement come to have little meaning. Mr. Savage simply equates some of the terms he uses with 'good' and some with 'bad'. What we actually want to know is not that the critic considers that what is second-hand is inferior to what is original in literature, but what he considers that elusive 'personal, original, creative quality' to be. When one actually comes to apply this criticism to, for example, the work of the early eighteenth century in England, one begins to realize that the distinction between what is 'social' in literature, and what is 'personal', is not made so easily as the passage above might suggest. One can pick out fairly superficially qualities and interests which are purely fashionable, which emerge as simple facts of history, like, for example, some of the occasional verses of Swift, but where in *The Rape of the Lock* does the social flavour end, and the personal begin?

This type of comment might be made on a great deal of Mr. Savage's book. It suggests also a point which one might make, without, I hope, being accused of deliberate perversity. Mr. Savage tends to say so much, with the general tenour of which one must agree, that sometimes the impression which he makes is reduced by his very refusal to accept a limitation. One tends to feel that one is less in contact with a personality in his work, than with a number of people, more or less in agreement with each other, discussing the nature of good writing and all its ancillary problems. This is a very difficult criticism to make, since it is one that one can make only too rarely on modern criticism. Most is marked with an immature personality, carried into print by the coterie in which it has developed. Not so the criticism of Mr. Savage. He stands, independently enough, outside the gang-warfare of present-day writing, and the danger he runs in his principal essay is rather of appearing to write without personality at all than of making a tiresome personal impression of immaturity. Mr. Savage's system, which may now be examined, has a great deal to recommend it. Some general principles of criticism are necessary to the critic, and within the bounds which they set to his speculation, he is enabled

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to make his judgments in a coherent, ordered and balanced way. But we ultimately judge him, not by the system within which he organizes his response to what he reads, not by the structure of his theory, but by the degree of sensitivity, the acuteness of perception in excess of our own, which he shows when he comes to make individual judgments on individual works. A single sentence of Coleridge, though all that goes before and comes after it may seem to us quite mistaken or stupid, may thus have more critical interest than the most comprehensive and painstaking work on the principles of criticism, and I, at least, would be prepared to sacrifice the whole of Dr. I. A. Richards 'Principles of Literary Criticism', excellent in some respects though it is, for a few paragraphs apparently delivered ex-cathedra and almost casually, by T. S. Eliot.

Mr. Savage's book consists of a longish essay in critical theory, called 'The Personal Principle', which is sound and convincing, though for reasons suggested above I must confess that I found it in places rather tedious. This is followed by studies of Yeats, Eliot, Hart Crane, Harold Monro, Lawrence and Auden. There are, in addition, a note on 'Poetry and Nature' as a footnote to the principal essay, and an appendix disagreeing most reasonably with Mr. C. S. Lewis's part of the controversy, 'The Personal Heresy'. Mr. Savage, in what is really the central feature of his theory of criticism, and so of his theory of writing, adjudicates in a quite balanced fashion between the 'classical' and 'romantic' types of mind and writing, and commits himself eventually, after a great deal of consideration, to a synthesis of the two as the most satisfactory basis for a healthy literary achievement. Even so, the balance of his sympathy is with the personal freedom of the romantic writer rather than with the 'external' control of the classical. Now this, it seems to me, although in the course of his consideration of it all Mr. Savage makes many very interesting and intelligent points, is in danger of being ultimately reducible to a question of what is meant by words. Is the discipline to which a 'classical' writer is subject any less a personal one because it happens to be part and parcel of the whole range of social life around him? Is not the antithesis between the claims of society, and the claims of the individual writer in literary history ultimately a false one? For the outstanding writer will write as he chooses whether he happens to be part of a homogeneous, cultured society, with an assured public the nature of which he can predict, or whether he writes for a disorganized, scattered minority who continue in a time of disruption and artistic impoverishment to preserve vigorous traditional standards which are firm without being rigid. The danger of the corruption of a genius by the debased values of a society into which he is born, does of course occur from time to time. But I see no reason to regard as permanent and inevitable a conflict of a deep-rooted nature between public and private values. I agree with Mr. Savage, if I understand him rightly, when he says that 'personal, original creative work is favoured by a situation in which the values of society are subordinated to the values of personality', but whether or not a fine literature results

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depend entirely on the nature of the personal and social values. What is outstanding in modern literature is not so because it happens to be at variance with public taste to-day, but because it is what it is, and what it is can still be appreciated by a man of wide experience and cultivated taste. The fact that readers of this type are proportionately fewer than at other times simply suggests that the values of society are lower than they have been in the past, that society asks not for too great a conformity to traditional standards from the modern writer, but for too little. When Mr. Savage says that 'the creative mind has reached a situation in which it is no longer subject to the restrictions of exterior limitations. It is faced with the responsibility of operating in freedom', he seems to regard this as an advantage for the writer. I should say that it is a very great disadvantage, and a depressing comment on the state of contemporary society. And when he says that 'poetry has been purged of all inessential elements', that 'literature is in a position of yet greater freedom to develop according to its own interior demands' as a result of the breaking away of the press and popular writing, the 'social element' of earlier literary production, from the body of literature proper, he seems to me to say something which is not merely demonstrably untrue, but which places the emphasis of approval upon that state of affairs which is precisely wrong to-day; that is, the cleavage in every department of life between political and economic and commercial values upon the one hand, and humane, spiritual or religious values on the other. Literature does, in fact, become unhealthy in just that situation which arises when the average reader has no claim to make upon the genuine writer, because he can be sure of getting easy satisfaction from a legion of scribblers and charlatans. Mr. Savage's 'personal principle' in literature, which makes the individual always right and the common reader always wrong, works well enough to-day and in this country, but it seems to me that the freedom to write as he likes, without public to read him, and without a social context which gives any general significance to his personal experience or values, is scarcely a freedom which the modern writer should welcome with satisfaction. When we read in the preface to this book that 'literature and life must face each other, determinedly and unflinchingly', we should not overlook the possibility that the two can stare at each other with the vacant rumination of a couple of placid cows, without the registration of any effect by either one or the other.

These are the chief points of difference which one can find with Mr. Savage's book. He deserves to be judged by severe standards, and there is much which he says which deserves wide approval. I do not comment on this at any length, because, as far as the public for *Scrutiny* is concerned, he is mostly preaching to the converted. The importance which he assigns to the writing of Hart Crane and Harold Monro will perhaps startle some; and his adverse criticism of the later work of Eliot, which he sees as markedly inferior to the earlier poems, is not convincing, although it is inevitable that, with the critical theory which he tends to allow occasionally to run away

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with him, he should consider that in 'East Coker' 'patches of imagery are stuck on, as it were, from outside, to give poetic verisimilitude to a skeleton of abstract intellectualism'. The difference between us here is quite simply one of differently developed sensibility; and I am not sufficiently impressed by what Mr. Savage says to yield my reaction to his own. The essays on D. H. Lawrence and on Auden are good, and that on Yeats is a convenient summary of a great deal of sensible comment made upon him since his death. There are here and there asides on Browning, Tennyson and Swinburne which make one regret that Mr. Savage has set out to outline a 'valid creative attitude for the modern poet', instead of saying what he thinks about individual pieces of writing and leaving the reader to draw his own conclusions. Let the modern poet find his own valid creative attitude. He will in any case, and since their functions are different, it will not necessarily be that of the good critic. Yeats, for example, can be a most atrociously inadequate critic, when he puts up his plate seriously, though he can make the most illuminating remarks in the course of his practice of poetry.

In spite of all this, Mr. Savage is well worth reading, and if the Book Society could manage to slip his name on their list, he might do a great deal of good to those who, since the Book Society's recommendation of Mr. Scarfe's *Auden and After,* have come to regard modern verse as just one long intoxicating thrill.

R. G. LIENHARDT.

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APPROACH TO SHAKESPEARE

SHAKESPEARE AND THE POPULAR DRAMATIC TRADITION, by S. L. Bethell (King and Staples, 10/6).

Books of this sort present a peculiar problem to the *Scrutiny* reviewer. Owing, and, refreshingly, acknowledging a large debt to those critics one most respects, and supporting a generally sympathetic argument, they nevertheless leave one, by their very thoroughness, not a little uneasy.[1]

Mr. Bethell retails with persistence the stock of 'modern Shakespearean criticism'—the significance of verse and stage conventions in detail, the interpretative habits of the Elizabethan audience, the 'body of traditional assumptions', the 'little cultural stratification', the concept of Order; Johnson on dramatic illusion is played off against Sidney; he sees the weaknesses of Bradley and Stoll; like Professor Dover Wilson, he understands Falstaff ('(a) amusing; (b) morally reprehensible'); and he can give us a potted account of the post-Renaissance 'changing climate of opinion'. All this is very familiar, but, being by no means universally accepted, eminently eligible for popularization. In such a case one may be excusably suspicious of a merely mechanical circulation and, if uninformed by first-hand perception, debasing of the new currency.

I feel sure that the author would, however, reject any such limitation, and indeed claim to display a peculiar, extra-academic, thesis or point of view; yet his original research and elucidation, though interesting, are disproportionately small. Long passages are almost verbally repetitive of *Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy,* and Miss Bradbrook does not seem at any comparative disadvantage (as might be suggested) in the whole field, especially as Mr. Bethell's tone is by no means impeccable.[2] His title, besides, should not be taken too seriously. Mr. Bethell has apparently no acquaintance with mediaeval drama outside one easily accessible source and the usual commonplaces,[3] and, beyond Shakespeare, the adequacy of his investigations of Elizabethan drama is questionable (and certainly not very enterprising): 'Jonson, though his critical theory permitted him success in the field of intellectual comedy, failed in the attempt to write 'classical' tragedies which would compete with those of the popular theatre'

[1]And Mr. Eliot, to judge by his Introduction, a little weary.

[2]*e.g.* the (strictly) impertinent: 'whole influence of an immorally mechanized society'; 'their minds had not been warped by the naïve incredulity of scientific naturalism'.

[3]Apart from commonsense remarks on the narrative 'direct statement' element; certainly no new approach.

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('*Sejanus* . . . intolerably dull'). He is not so ready to follow Mr. Eliot in the distinction between 'the convention of an individual dramatist' and the lack of a common convention (despite abundant *conventions*), nor in the correlated judgment of the tendency of Elizabethan drama; in both cases, we can only surmise, from limitations of knowledge. For his enthusiastic extolling of the 'plasticity' of the drama could surely never be sustained by a diet of minor Elizabethans and the contrasted staple of the miracle cycles; while on the other hand the degeneration of the theatre ('the tendency towards naturalism') is attributed to the 'neo-classicists' (including Jonson, presumably).

Indeed these two counters, 'neo-classicism' and 'naturalism' seem to fascinate Mr. Bethell and his juggling with them is intriguing and interminable: 'neo-classical—later naturalistic', 'neo-classicism having declined into naturalism', 'the interfering logic of neo-classical and naturalistic criticism', and so on. This not unfamiliar habit gets full scope in generalizations—'Theatrical naturalism, as we have seen, is a product[4] of philosophical materialism which monistically denies reality to the super-natural',[5] and writing of that quality, sustained by Mr. Bethell's concern and intention, can lead far and deep—'The conscious delight in paradox evinced by the Elizabethans and Jacobeans, is a conscious assertion of the Christian tradition, assailed by new Renaissance attitudes'.

But the author's real contribution, as all the reviewers noted, is the discussion of the Popular Dramatic Tradition as surviving in the film audience: 'music-hall, pantomime, review and musical comedy, together with the average purely commercial Hollywood film, require of an audience the same basic attitudes to dramatic illusion as a mediaeval 'miracle' or a play of Shakespeare'. His hasty disclaimer—'This is not a veiled appeal for commercial entertainment', cannot seriously qualify his later, lengthy, discussion of the devices of 'the Marx Brothers, those excellent Hollywood comedians, who combine the wildest nonsense with a delicate satirical probing of the defective values in our modern civilization' and the remark 'The effect is the same as in Shakespeare'. The context may be new, but this habit of thought is not peculiar[6] to Mr. Bethell. One wonders whether it is native, or merely a recognition of an inferior audience. In any case, the associated characteristics, from those noted above, through his Further Ramifications of Multi-

[4]Mr. Bethell deplores 'Marxian over-simplification'.

[5]I don't think it perverse to say, reminiscent of 'The Mind of the Maker'. Mr. Bethell prefers Western and ganster films above Miss Sayers and Mr. Priestley.

[6]There is no need to particularize; I am reminded of an article some months ago in an 'intellectual progressive' weekly that saw in C.E.M.A., Penguin Books, Picture Post and ITMA, evidence of a cultural awakening.

[7]Even Mr. Traversi's account of the end of the play might benefit, I feel.

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consciousness and the eagerly undertaken complications of Certain Problems, to the footnote to p. 126, bear out one's initial doubts; only a rigorous demonstration of vital criticism could allay them. A lengthy account of *Lear,* largely derivative, does offer an interpretation of Cordelia's function inviting consideration;[7] but one realizes how facile, for instance, 'Lear's purgatory' can be, when one reads (in the only other extensive interpretation), 'Antony's purgatory lies in military failure' with no other demonstration of the purgatorial quality than the assurance 'The position is theologically orthodox'.

To declare 'The critic has no rules, only a delicate sense of verbal implications' without the complementary adoption of a *sustained* critical discipline in particular analysis is, in short, to forfeit all chance of rendering any such academic summary as this profitable.

A. I. DOYLE

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'MODERN POETRY' IN SCHOOL

INTRODUCING MODERN POETRY : an anthology compiled, with an introduction, by W. G. Bebbington (*Faber and Faber*, 6/-).

Teachers of English should be tolerant towards one another. I do not know in what school Mr. Bebbington teaches, or whether it is public, private or state-aided secondary: but whatever type it is, I do not doubt that he, like all of us, has been continually compelled to compromise, to introduce the good by way of the second-rate, in order to instil any interest in literature in general, in poetry in particular, into his pupils, save for the exceptional few. I do not consider Stephen Spender a very good poet: I consider a much-publicized poetess downright silly and trivial: yet, if I were to find any of my pupils reading either for their own enjoyment, I should consider it a hopeful and encouraging sign. Both are represented in Mr. Bebbington's anthology, and so are many others of varying degrees of merit from Mr. Eliot downwards.

All of this is preamble to saying that I sympathise with Mr. Bebbington's intention, and that I am not going to condemn his anthology on the grounds that it contains a great deal of inferior verse. He says, very rightly, 'As a schoolmaster I know that boys and girls are leaving the secondary schools thinking that poetry is the moribund hobby of the antiquarians; and as a citizen I also know that most adults have the same idea. *The Charge of the Light Brigade* is still the *pièce de résistance* of the party, and the only contemporary verse that seems to be widely known and appreciated is the dance-tune "lyric" and the music-hall "monologue".' The anthology, then, 'has been made in order to convince those who need convincing that . . . . poetry is still what it always has been and always must be, ever young and dynamic'. I think the romantic vagueness of the last words is somewhat betraying: together with Mr. Bebbington's distinction between 'modern' and 'contemporary', it leads me to think that, to him, 'modern' is apt to mean up-to-date or fashionable. Hence, perhaps, the number of poets included, and the apologies for those omitted. In other words, the principle of selection is not apparent: one is apt to wonder if there has been any principle at all, besides that of date. Mr. Bebbington's other aim of showing that all modern poetry is not difficult is not sufficient excuse for many of his selections; I doubt if 'difficulty' is the bar to appreciation that he appears to think it: certainly, the result of this belief is to give a very inadequate representation of Eliot, Empson, and even Auden. Anyone who forms his impressions of Eliot from the selection given here will not have gone far towards appreciating this poet or modern poetry in general.

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To return to the more particular aim of the book: the intelligent pupil, interested in poetry, and ready for guidance in the controversial realms of modern verse, may accept much of the work at the author's and editor's valuation: much of it—the war and political poems, particularly—has a ready appeal. (It is, perhaps, unnecessary to point out that this, too, is a fruitful source of confusion for genuine appreciation). But I am sure this same intelligent pupil will feel resentful and scornful if he is expected to take *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* and the distinguished lady-poet's whimsies and sentimental platitudes as representative examples of specifically 'modern' as distinguished from 'contemporary' verse.

I consider the book disappointing and inadequate then, on the grounds that there seems no adequate principle of selection, with the result that the very aim Mr. Bebbington proposes is likely to be defeated. Perhaps the real root of the trouble is the assumption that modern poetry is a particular category that needs special introduction.

F. CHAPMAN.

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